GODWARD

HOUCK

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GODWARD:

or

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BY THE

REV. FREDERICK A. HOUCK

Author of

"Our Palace Wonderful," "The Life of St. Gerlach," "The Angels, Good and Bad," "The Palace Beautiful," etc.

"Show, O Lord, Thy ways to me, and teach me Thy paths." Ps. 24, 4

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THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED
TO MY ESTEEMED INSTRUCTORS
IN
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

PREFACE

Early in life we are made to realize that "we have not here a lasting city." We learn to our sorrow that the bonds of love and sympathy that unite us to others are destroyed by death. As we grow older we are reminded at every turn along life's highways and byways that we are traveling on a path by which we shall not return; and, although we are wont to speak of the pleasures of travel, very many make the journey in constant dread of imaginary evils. Others do not seem to know in what direction they are going and resemble a traveler who has lost his way. A few endeavor to convince themselves that we are all headed towards extinction. Death, they would have us believe, puts an end to life's pilgrimage just as a gust of wind puts an end to a candle's flame. Others again do not care to make sure what road they are to follow. They resemble tramps and hoboes. In their shiftless, carefree manner they give little or no thought to

whence they come, or whither they are going.

It is clear that a wayfarer must feel ill at ease so long as he does not know his destination. No one can enjoy life so long as he is not morally certain how it will end. How sad to realize that man's origin and destiny—so clearly revealed by their Divine Author—are so little known. What more consoling than to know for certain that we come from God, and are destined to return to Him—from God the Creator to God the Consummator.

Countless are the paths by which men have passed through life and reached God. Some, however, are more direct than others. The one outlined in these pages does not pretend to be the best, nor the shortest. *Godward* is pointed out in the hope that its pursuit may bring the reader peace and joy on this earth, as well as eternal bliss in the world beyond.

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I

INTRODUCTION

THIS book essays to offer the reader a little help in reducing life to a correct system. A false or inadequate view of man's origin and destiny can never satisfy. The man who limits his view to the things of time and of sense-perception cannot be happy. By doing so his capacity for God, for whom we all are created is sure to remain undeveloped, and this will render him discontented. There can be no true peace and joy in the heart that does not know and seek God. The man who is wholly absorbed in the things that pertain to health and wealth has a false and distorted view of human life. Nor can anyone do justice to the "Giver of every best gift" by assigning Him a secondary place in his world-view. The Supreme Being will not have us accept Him lightly, or treat Him as a servant. He obliges us to love, serve, and worship Him. Hence, God will gradually become either everything

in one's esteem, or practically nothing. A salutary knowledge of God is man's greatest need, for we cannot cherish that of which we are ignorant, nor can we be happy without loving Him for whom our heart is created.

That this need on the part of man for God is not receiving due attention in our day may be concluded from various signs in our public life. How seldom do we see God given the first place in international, or even in national, affairs. And surely no one will maintain that the Almighty holds the place of honor in the world of art and applied science. True, in certain countries one meets with evidences of godliness at every turn. A few centuries ago the finest, rarest, and most beautiful creations of the fine arts were used to give public expression to civil and national reverence for God. The virtue of religion is plainly evidenced in the architectural monuments that have come down to us from those times. Hence, we may conclude that their builders and adorners loved God, thought God, and revered God. Can it be said this is the case among us?

It cannot be denied that mankind has progressed; but progress in some things that make

for culture and civilization may exist simultaneously with retrogression in others that are just as essential to the life and prosperity of a people or nation. No institution, whether public or private, that ignores Almighty God, can have enduring value or contribute true progress.

It may be truthfully said that the world's greatest malady comes from trying to get along without God. We need God first, last, and always in our public as well as in our private institutions and associations, in order that they may enjoy and promote true peace and happiness. This little treatise endeavors in an humble manner to supply the individual with that which we all need, *viz.*, the means of a closer friendship and a higher union with God.

It is a source of delight to practise the corporal works of mercy, that is, to supply the needy with food, to nurse the sick, etc. Compassionate service of this kind "blesses him that gives as well as him that takes." The spiritual works of mercy, however, seem to offer a greater recompense; and, surely no spiritual work of mercy is preferable to that of helping others to acquire a greater knowl-

edge of God. Such salutary knowledge and wisdom fosters that blessed union with the all-good God which alone can satisfy the human heart. "Man's good consists in the knowledge of truth—not in the knowledge of any truth—but, so far as the desire of knowledge is directed in due manner to the knowledge of the Sovereign Truth, wherein supreme happiness consists." (St. Thomas.) The supernatural knowledge of God brings true joy and secures eternal life. "This is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (St. John 17, 3). It lies within the power of every human being to acquire this knowledge and thus to dig in his soul a fountain of "water springing up into life everlasting" (St. John 4, 14).

In fact, it is impossible to attain true happiness in this world in any other way than by striving to satisfy one's innate hunger and thirst for God. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice for they shall have their fill." He who quenches his natural thirst at a well shall thirst again; but he who quenches the thirst of his soul at the fountain of Faith, shall be able to satisfy it forever: "He that believeth in Me shall never thirst"

(St. John 6, 35). Only the salutary water that flows from a living faith can satisfy man's inborn thirst for happiness. By drinking deep of this perennial fountain of "living water," we can obtain, already in this world, a foretaste of that celestial bliss which consists in the perfect knowledge of God—who is Eternal Truth.

The author disclaims any merit of originality. The truths, maxims, and principles here set forth are not new. Many of them were known to the ancients, and some of them, no doubt, recur again and again in current magazines. Still, it is hoped that at least a few of the consoling truths here set forth will be seen in a new light and thus tend to stimulate Christian hope. And if the manner of presentation enables the reader to discern the path of life more clearly, he will have greater joy in following it.

The reader will find numerous extracts and passages from the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa Philosophica* of St. Thomas Aquinas, whom Pope Leo XIII called the "greatest of teachers" and the "master and prince of all other scholastic doctors." (Encyclical *"Aeterni Patris."*) One of the latest biographers of

St. Thomas, Père Petitot, O. P., who in his *St. Thomas d'Aquin,* has given us a contemporary sketch full of vigor and insight, surmises that St. Thomas died of divine love, following an ecstasy experienced some three months before his death. "After that nothing on earth could interest him; even his beloved *Summa* was laid aside incomplete. Some foretaste of the Beatific Vision had rendered him once more dumb." [1] In quoting the Angelic Doctor we have made judicious use of the "Literal Translation" made by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province.

[1] See the *Fortnightly Review.* St. Louis, Mo., Vol. XXXI. No. 2, p. 37.

GODWARD

GODWARD

CHAPTER I

MAN FOR GOD

Thou from primeval nothingness didst call
  First chaos, then existence. Lord! in Thee
Eternity had its foundation; all
  Sprung forth from Thee; of light, joy, harmony,
Sole Origin—all life, all beauty Thine.
  Thy word created all, and doth create;
Thy splendor fills all space with rays divine.
  Thou art, and wert, and shalt be! Glorious!
    Great!
Light-giving, Life-sustaining Potentate!
                Derzhavin-Bowring.

In our search for a secure and certain path Godward, let us begin with a consideration of human nature; for every human being becomes acquainted with himself first. The proper study of mankind is man, said Pope. The majority of men readily concede this

truth; yet if we search the various systems of philosophy and religious creeds for an explanation of man's origin, nature, and destiny, we shall find that they contain diverse and contradictory views and opinions. The ancients believed that the solution to the problem of life was to be found in self-knowledge ("know thyself!"), but they had no key to the correct knowledge of self.

Among the unfortunates who deny that man is created by God and placed in this world to work out an eternal destiny, the most numerous perhaps are the materialists. The materialist sees nothing save brute matter in man. Death and the decomposition that follows, is simply a transforming process of the substance of one individual into that which will constitute another person or thing; and since in the shallow minds of these theorists there is no God to whom man is responsible, they maintain that, to become a *perfect man,* one need but become a perfect animal or a healthy organism. They deny that man is capable of moral development or perfection. Consequently, materialists place their ideals in what is purely natural and temporal: "By what I see and hear," says Alfred H. Lewis,

"two lessons are taught,—get rich, get office." [1]

The fatalist concedes that there is a Deity, but, like the materialist, he believes that man is not responsible to a higher being; for, he adds, the problem of moral perfection or imperfection has been unalterably decreed from all eternity. Our course, he avers, has been mapped out for us and our lives determined in such a manner that we have no say in the direction in which we are to go. To hold this doctrine is implicitly to deny that man possesses free-will or moral responsibility.

The pantheist dreams away his mortal existence in the hallucination that he is a form or emanation of the Deity; that there is but one responsible agent in the universe; that no one is capable of morally good or bad actions. He denies that man possesses individuality in the strict sense. Everyone shall eventually be absorbed by the Deity, in whom, and by whom we are destined to exist for all eternity. Man, therefore, is incapable of meriting reward or deserving punishment.

The agnostic pretends to be ignorant of man's nature and end, and, what is worse, believes that man shall never be able to unravel

[1] *Cosmopolitan*, I, 1907.

the mystery of existence. To what dreadful misery and black despair these false theories of human life can and actually do lead people is exemplified every day throughout the world. The daily press records the sad fate of many who are driven by such erroneous views to all manner of crimes.

Some years ago a young man in New York City, thirty-six years of age, although healthy and prosperous, shot his wife and then himself. A note addressed to the coroner gave his reason for this double crime. "Being unable," he said, "to bear life's miseries any longer, I determined to end my life and to take my dearly beloved wife with me. Colonel Ingersoll is right in his views and lectures. He is, in my opinion, the most sensible man of the century." [2] Another, James T. McQuade, a New York millionaire, made this public statement: "I am dissatisfied. I am constantly craving for more money. I know hundreds of others who are in the same way. A wealthy man never can live happy." [3] Little wonder! he who allows himself to be led by the blind, must expect the fate of the blind. We cannot find peace and

[2] Cleveland *Plain Dealer,* June 13, 1895.
[3] Toledo *Bee,* March 9, 1906.

happiness where they do not exist. The end and purpose of man are not to be sought in the things which he must part with at the tomb. To accept the vagaries of atheists and infidels is like being led into a gloomy and impenetrable forest, and then, abandoned there.

Now, what is man's origin and destiny! How can he get the most out of life?

By the light of unaided reason we find that man is endowed with wonderful powers and faculties. In virtue of his human nature he is far superior to the other creatures of this world. Man alone possesses a spiritual soul. He alone has an eternal destiny. "As God is perfect, He bestowed perfections on His works according to their capacity to receive them: 'God's works are perfect' " (Deut. 32, 4). He himself is simply perfect by the fact that all things are pre-contained in Him, not as component parts, but as united in one simple whole. "Man is in a manner composed of all things, since he possesses a rational soul which is a spiritual substance, and in likeness to the heavenly bodies he is removed from contraries by an equable temperament; and as to the elements, he has them in their very substance, yet in such a way that the higher ele-

ments, fire and air, predominate in him by their power; for life is mostly found where there is heat, which is from fire; and where there is humor, which is of the air. But the inferior elements abound in man by their substance; otherwise, the mingling of elements would not be evenly balanced, unless the inferior elements, which have the less power, predominated in quantity. Therefore, the body of man is said to have been formed from the slime of the earth; because earth and water mingled are called slime, and for this reason man is called a microcosm [little world] because all creatures of the world are in a way to be found in him." [4]

Even an imperfect knowledge of the wonderful nature God has given us leads to Him. We possess the faculty of finding and enjoying the infinite Creator in all His works, but especially in ourselves, since we are fashioned in His image and likeness. The Christian definition of man has always been the same. The reason is evident; for, the true concept of human nature can never be superseded by another. From right reason as well as revelation we know that man is a creature

[4] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 91, a. 1.

composed of body and soul, and made in the image and likeness of God. "God created man to His own image" (Gen. 7, 27).

Anyone who uses his reason rightly will arrive at the conviction that man is created by and for God. No man in his senses would ever ascribe his origin to himself. We know, too, that no human being could be the efficient cause of his fellow-man. The human soul is a spiritual being, and hence a simple and indivisible substance. Although parents place the condition of the child they beget, it is God who creates the rational soul, which is the principle of human life.

Adam and Eve were immediately created by God, and from them the whole human race descends: "And God said: let us make man to our image and likeness" (Gen. 1, 26). "And the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2, 7). "And the Lord God built the rib which He took from Adam into a woman, and brought her to Adam" (Gen. 2, 22). And "Adam called the name of his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living" (Gen. 3, 20). "Only this I have found, that God made man

right." (Eccl. 7, 30). How eloquently the mother of the Machabees testifies to the sublime origin of her children: "I know not how you were formed in my womb; for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life: neither did I form limb of every one of you" (II Mac. 7, 22).

Since philosophy no less than revelation teaches that we are creatures of God, we belong not to ourselves, but to Him. We have been put here to fulfill the purpose of our Creator. That God had a well-defined purpose in creating us is certain. Whoever makes a thing, does so for a purpose. For example, a dynamo is built to generate electricity; hence, this is the purpose in the mind of him who makes the dynamo; and if a machine of this kind does not produce an electric current, it is useless as a dynamo. Man is created to serve God, and to do so of his own free will; if he neglects to fulfill this purpose, his life is a failure. There is an essential difference between man and the irrational creatures in this regard; for they lack freewill. They serve God's purpose in other ways. All terrestrial life,. for example, has been made dependent upon the sun, which in turn serves the

Creator by furnishing the required light and heat. But the sun cannot know God, and therefore can not give Him conscious service. It carries out God's will and serves mundane creatures blindly, in a predetermined and unalterable manner. And the time will come when the great oven of the solar system, through no fault of its own, will be nothing more than a burnt-out cinder. Even then, in whatever form or condition it may be, the sun will serve God's purpose no less than it does at present.

Man is destined to live forever. He has a soul that is immortal and endowed with liberty. Hence, he is created to serve God, and to do so freely. Godly is our origin and godly our destiny; our life, too, must be godly. Man, however, being a free moral agent, can frustrate his divinely appointed purpose, and make himself deserving of punishment. Such unrepentant, rebellious children God must punish either in this world or in the next. "It is due to God that there should be fulfilled in all creatures what His will and wisdom require, and what manifests His goodness. In this respect, God's justice regards what befits Him; inasmuch as He renders to Himself

what is due to Himself. It is also due to a created thing that it should possess what is ordered to it; thus it is due to man to have hands, and that other animals should serve him. Thus also God exercises justice, when He gives to each thing what is due to it by its nature and condition. This debt, however, is derived from the former; since what is due to each thing is due to it according to the divine wisdom. And although God in this way pays each thing its due, yet He Himself is not the debtor, since He is not directed to other things, but rather other things [are directed] to Him." [5] "Many are the scourges of the sinner, but mercy shall encompass him that hopeth in the Lord" (Ps. 31, 10.)

Man is called into being by a creative act of God for the purpose of giving Him glory. Here we have the origin and final end of every human being. Our happiness, therefore, is to be sought and found in giving glory to the Creator. The farther we stray, whether in theory or practice, from this purpose of our being, the unhappier we become. Even a superficial study of our sublime and exalted nature will convince us that we have

[5] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 21, a. 1.

been created to give glory to God for time and eternity. By so doing man advances Godward. From God we have gone forth, and to God we are destined to return. During the brief interval that intervenes, it is our principal duty to learn to know and serve God, who is the "beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, the first and the last" of every rational creature. This is what is meant by the term, "to glorify God." "Glory signifies knowledge with praise." It means to reflect and proclaim the perfections of the Prototype according to the kind and capacity of one's nature. The more perfectly man learns to know and serve the Almighty, the more perfectly does he develop in himself his God-given nature. A *man* in the fullest and truest sense is he who strives most to attain the perfection of human nature by giving glory to God. Since man is a creature composed of body and soul, and made to the image and likeness of God, his chief endeavor must be to perfect himself morally.

We can easily know, too, in what manner we are to give glory to God. In the first place it is incumbent upon all men to preserve and perfect their physical powers and faculties. Cer-

tainly no one deserves to be called a man who wantonly destroys or effaces the natural image of God as impressed on his bodily organism. *Mens sana in corpore sano,* a sane mind in a sound body. The human body, like a skillfully made watch, must be kept in fit condition to serve its manifold purposes. Its five senses are to be used to acquaint us with the attributes of God as they are reflected from the material universe. This is evident from their position and nature. "An upright stature is becoming to man—for the senses are given to him, not only for the purpose of procuring the necessaries of life, for which they are bestowed on other animals, but also for the purpose of knowledge; whereas the other animals take delight in the objects of the senses only as ordered to food and sex, man alone takes pleasure in the beauty of sensible objects for its own sake. Therefore, as the senses are situated chiefly in the face, other animals have their face turned to the ground, as it were for the purpose of seeking food and procuring a livelihood; whereas man has his face erect, in order that by the senses, and chiefly by sight, which is more subtle and penetrates farther into the differences of things, he may freely

survey the sensible objects around him, both heavenly and earthly, so as to gather intelligible truth from all things." [6]

Though physical and intellectual development is good and necessary, moral development is incomparably better; yes, it is absolutely essential to man's temporal and eternal happiness. This brings us to the greatest faculty of the human soul, freewill. In the will of man we find the efficient cause of virtue as well as of vice. It is man's free choice that makes his thoughts, words, and deeds morally good or bad. Take away man's freewill, and you at once render him irresponsible. Without this faculty he sinks, as far as the moral order is concerned, to the plane of the brute beast. Were we not endowed with liberty of will, we could not choose between moral good and evil, between right and wrong. It is this prerogative, more than any other, which makes us masters over irrational creation. On account of our freewill, God could give us "dominion over the fishes of the sea, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field." By means of this faculty, supernaturalized by divine grace, we are enabled to rule over the

[6] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 91, a. 3.

invisible powers of darkness, as well as over the visible world of matter. It is owing, moreover, to this faculty that we are responsible to God for our deliberate thoughts, words, and deeds. Were we forced to do right or wrong, we could neither deserve an eternal reward nor become guilty of an everlasting punishment.

Our free will makes us answerable also to the community in which we live. The codes of law in vogue among the tribes and nations of the earth give testimony to the universal belief of mankind in liberty and responsibility.

Indeed, "it is the will by which we sin, or live well, and so the will extends to opposite things. The will does not desire of necessity, whatsoever it desires. In order to make this evident, we must observe that, as the intellect naturally and of necessity adheres to the first principles, so the will adheres to the last end. Now there are some things intelligible that have not a necessary connection with the first principles; such as contingent propositions, the denial of which does not involve a denial of the first principles; and to such the intellect does not assent of necessity. But there are some propositions which have a necessary connec-

tion with the first principles; such as demonstrable conclusions, a denial of which involves a denial of the first principles. And to these the intellect assents of necessity, when once it is aware of the necessary connection of these conclusions with the principles; but it does not assent of necessity until through the demonstration it recognizes the necessity of such connection. It is the same with the will. For there are certain individual goods which have not a necessary connection with happiness, because without them a man can be happy; and to such the will does not adhere of necessity. But there are some things which have a necessary connection with happiness, by means of which things man adheres to God, in whom alone true happiness consists. Nevertheless, until through the certitude of the Divine Vision the necessity of such connection be shown, the will does not adhere to God, of necessity; nor to those things which are of God. But the will of the man who sees God in His Essence, of necessity adheres to God, just as now we desire of necessity to be happy. It is therefore clear that the will does not desire of necessity whatever it desires." [7]

[7] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 82, a. 2.

Man, then, possesses the power of choosing between right and wrong. He is capable of leading a virtuous or a vicious life. However, he can be easily deceived and choose a temporal good in preference to an eternal good, or a seeming good to a real good. Owing to the fall of our first parents, the human will has been greatly weakened and the intellect darkened. Man by nature is no longer in possession of that pristine light and force which enabled him to avoid evil, and to do good easily. "In the state of innocence, for example, the will of man would have been so ordered that, without any danger of strife, men would have used in common, according to each one's need, those things of which they are masters." [8]

So, too, man would have had a far more perfect dominion of the goods which are meant primarily for his own personal advantage and enjoyment. Within us there is a wealth of latent powers and talents meant originally to be at our complete service by means of freewill. This faculty, because of its weakness consequent on sin, is now at times misled and seduced to act contrary to the dictates of reason.

[8] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 97.

"As the philosopher says.[9] We observe in man a despotic and a politic principle; for the soul dominates the body by a despotic power; but the intellect dominates the appetite by a politic and royal power. For a power is called despotic whereby a man rules his slaves, who have not the right to resist in any way the orders of the one that commands them, since they have nothing of their own. But that power is called politic and royal by which a man rules over free subjects, who, though subject to the government of the ruler, have nevertheless something of their own by reason of which they can resist the orders of him who commands. And so, the soul is said to rule the body by a despotic power, because the members of the body cannot in any way resist the sway of the soul, but at the soul's command, both hand and foot and whatever member is naturally moved by voluntary movement, is moved at once. But the intellect or reason is said to rule the irascible and concupiscible by a politic power; because the sensitive appetite has something of its own, by virtue whereof it can resist the commands of reason. For the sensitive appetite is naturally

[9] Aristotle, *Polit.* I.

moved, not only by the estimative power in other animals, and in man by the cogitative power which the universal reason guides, but also by the imagination and the senses. Whence it is that we experience that the irascible and concupiscible powers do resist reason, inasmuch as we feel or imagine something pleasant, which reason forbids, or unpleasant which reason commands. And so from the fact that the irascible and concupiscible resist reason in something, we must not conclude that they do not obey." [10] Hence, even now, in his fallen state, man can secure obedience from his corrupt nature, but not without vigilance and the assistance of God's grace. In the uninterrupted combat for the mastery of one's free-will over the temptation to wrong-doing is to be found the probation which each and every human being must undergo. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."

If there were nothing to withdraw us from the Supreme Good, as is now the case with the blessed in Heaven, the consoling promise, "I will be thy reward exceeding great," could have no meaning in our regard. And "if God

[10] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 81, a. 3.

deprived the world of all those things which proved an occasion of transgressing His will, the universe itself would have been imperfect. Nor was it fitting for the common good to be destroyed in order that individual evil might be avoided; especially as God is so powerful that He can direct any evil to a good end." [11]

With the assistance of God's grace man can rise superior to temptation, and direct the evils that fall to his lot to a "good end." For by a merciful ordinance, "to them that love God all things work together unto good."

"All things happen equally to the good and the wicked, as regards the substance of temperal good or evil; but not as regards the end, since the good and not the wicked are led to beatitude by them." [12] Thus, independently of health, station, or worldly possessions, even the poorest of the poor can, by the force of his freewill and divine grace, acquire moral perfection. And the more perfect one is *morally,* the more of a man he is. And the more he perfects the nature God has given him, the closer will be the bond of union between him and his Maker.

[11] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 92, a. 1.
[12] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, qu. 114, a. 10.

To mortal man, the sovereign Maker said,
That not in [sinful] nor in brief delight,
Nor in the fading echoes of Renown,
Power's purple robes, nor Pleasure's flowery lap,
The soul should [rest, or seek her end] : but, from
these
Turning disdainful to a [greater] Good,
Through all the ascent of things enlarge her view
Till every bound at length should disappear,
And Infinite Perfection close the scene.

Akenside.

CHAPTER II

THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY

Thou art!—Directing, guiding all—Thou art!
Direct my understanding then to Thee;
Control my spirit, guide my wandering heart:
Though but an atom 'midst immensity.
Still I am something, fashioned by Thy hand!
I hold a middle rank 'twixt heaven and earth—
On the last verge of mortal being stand,
Close to the realms where angels have their birth,
Just on the boundaries of the spirit-land.

Derzhavin-Bowring.

OBJECTIVELY, man is the grandest handiwork of God this side of the celestial paradise. In man—the glory of the visible universe—the supreme Lord has united the various perfections of His manifold creatures. Man has been termed by the ancients a microcosm—a small world in a large world. We Christians know that he is a macrocosm—a large world within a small world. Man is this and more in vir-

tue of his immortal soul and its sublime faculties—memory, intellect, and freewill. These superior endowments constitute him the center, crown, and glory of the visible universe. When compared with the other creatures of this world, we see that man holds his eminent position because of the nature God has given him.

The earth, too, as the home of man, is the most important of the celestial spheres. We have no certain knowledge that any of the other planets are inhabited. We may, then, conceive the millions of stars in the Milky Way observing as it were a respectful distance from the earth, and standing in awe and reverence before our planet because of its noble inhabitants. Moreover, it is evident from his superior nature and dignity, that man is created not for time, but for eternity. We are created not only *by* God, but also *for* God. We are placed in this world to know, love, and serve God. Hence, it must be not only possible, but easy to secure a clear and certain knowledge of God, the Supreme Lord.

Now the three principal ways we have of gaining a correct knowledge of God are from

the visible world, from the voice of conscience, and, lastly, from divine revelation.

It cannot be denied that man with his unaided reason can acquire a correct knowledge of God. Although God is infinite, and our mind is finite, yet we can know Him. "As our intellect is infinite in power, so does it know the infinite; for its power is indeed infinite inasmuch as it is not terminated by corporeal matter. Moreover, it can know the universal, which is abstracted from individual matter, and which consequently is not limited to one individual, but, considered in itself, extends to an indefinite number of individuals." [1]

That there must be one supreme Being, who is the principle of all the others, both visible and invisible, the Angelic Doctor proves thus: "We observe that in every genus multitude proceeds from some kind of unity: wherefore in every genus we find one first thing, which is the measure of all things found in that genus. Hence whatever things we find agreeing in one point must proceed from one principle. Now all things agree in the point of being. Therefore that which is the princi-

[1] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 86, a. 2.

ple of things must needs be only one; and this is God." [2]

Every substance in the universe, as well as the universe itself, postulates the existence of a creative and intelligent cause. Whenever and wherever we find an effect we must conclude that there exists an adequate and sufficient cause that produced it: "It is impossible, for instance, for contrary and discordant things to accord in one order always or frequently except by someone's governance, whereby each and all are made to tend to a definite end. Now we see that in the world things of different natures accord to one order, not seldom and fortuitously, but always or for the most part. Therefore it follows that there is someone by whose providence the world is governed. And this Being we call God." [3]

That the series of causes and effects which we behold about us cannot be infinite is clear. "In all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the ultimate, whether the intermediate be one or several. Now if the cause be removed, that which it causes is removed. Therefore if we remove the first, the

[2] St. Thomas, *Summa* c. *Gentiles*, l. I, c. 42.
[3] St. Thomas, *Summa* c. *Gentiles*, l. I, c. 13.

intermediate cannot be a cause. But if we go to infinity in efficient causes, no cause will be first. Therefore all the others which are intermediate will be removed. Now this is clearly false. Therefore we must suppose the existence of a first efficient cause; and this is God." [4]

No one of sound mind and good will can remain in ignorance of the Supreme Being. "The invisible things of Him [God], from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power, also, and His divinity" (Rom. 1, 20). So clearly is the truth that God exists reflected by the visible creation, that the same inspired writer calls those "inexcusable" who disbelieve in God. Man, therefore, can easily attain to the knowledge of God from a consideration of His works.

Conscience, too, or that innate knowledge and practical judgment which every sane rational being possesses of moral right or wrong, teaches that there must be a God, who rewards the good and punishes the wicked. It is by means of conscience that the Creator and Supreme Lord makes His will known to man at

[4] St. Thomas, *Summa* c. *Gentiles*, l. I, c. 13.

all times and under all circumstances. "The Gentiles . . . show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts between themselves accusing, or also defending one another" (Rom. 2, 14 sq.). Hence, every individual human being can arrive at a clear knowledge of a Supreme Lawgiver from the voice within his bosom.

Man, then, can know for certain that God exists; but, can he also know who and what God is? "In treating of the Divine Essence, the principal method to be followed is that of remotion. For the Divine Essence by its immensity surpasses every form to which our intellect reaches; and thus we cannot apprehend it by knowing what it is. But we have some knowledge thereof by knowing what it is not: and we shall approach all the nearer to the knowledge thereof according as we shall be enabled to remove by our intellect a greater number of things therefrom. For the more completely we see how a thing differs from others, the more perfectly we know it: since each thing has in itself its own being distinct from all other things. Wherefore when we know the definition of a thing, first we place it

in a genus, whereby we know in general what it is, and afterwards we add differences, so as to mark its distinction from other things: and thus we arrive at the complete knowledge of a thing's essence." [5] Since God has no peer, no equal, no being comparable to Him, we must say that all else must be removed from the essence of God, in order to arrive at a knowledge of it; and, since His essence must be infinite, there can be no adequate name for it.

Although we have no name to express the nature and essence of the Deity perfectly, yet the word "God" has a definite meaning; it is used "to signify something existing above all things, the principle of all things, and removed from all things."

The word God (Deus), however, is not always used in the same sense. "When we consider the proper way of expressing ourselves, the mode of signification must be considered no less than the thing signified. Hence, as this word God signifies the Divine Essence as in Him who possesses it, just as the name man signifies humanity in a [human] subject, others more truly have said that this word God, from its mode of signification, can, in its

[5] St. Thomas, *Summa* c. *Gentiles,* l. I, 14.

proper sense, stand for Person, as does the word man. So this word God sometimes stands for the Essence, as when we say God creates; because this predicate is attributed to the subject by reason of the form signified,—that is, Godhead. But sometimes it stands for the Person, either for only one, as when we say God begets, or for two, as when we say, God spirates; or for three, as when we say, to the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God." [6]

Moreover, "although God is really the same as Godhead, nevertheless the mode of signification is not in each case the same. For since this word God signifies the Divine Essence, in Him that possesses it, from its mode of signification it can of its own nature stand for Person. Thus the things which properly belong to the Persons, can be predicated of this word God, as for instance, we can say God is begotten or is generator. The word Essence, however, in its mode of signification, cannot stand for Person, because it signifies the Essence as an abstract form. Consequently, what properly belongs to the Persons whereby they are distinguished from each other, cannot be

[6] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I. qu. 39, a. 4.

attributed to the Essence. For that would imply distinction in the Divine Essence, in the same way as there exists distinction in the subjects." [7]

"If the essential attributes were appropriated to the Persons as exclusively belonging to each of them, then it would follow that one Person would be as a form as regards another; which Augustine altogether repudiates, showing that the Father is wise, not by the wisdom begotten by Him, as though only the Son were Wisdom; so that the Father and the Son together only can be wise, but not the Father without the Son. But the Son is called the Wisdom of the Father, because He is Wisdom from the Father who is Wisdom. For each of them is of Himself Wisdom; and both together are one Wisdom. Whence the Father is not wise by the wisdom begotten of Him but by the wisdom which is His own Essence." [8]

No human idea can compass God fully, and hence no one word can render God perfectly. Man cannot express perfectly that which he cannot comprehend or understand perfectly.

[7] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 39, a. 5.
[8] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 39, a. 7.

"There are no words," says St. Gregery of Nazianzen, "by which man can declare the *nature* of God." And St. Thomas of Aquin adds: "Among the many names that are given to God, there cannot be found one which defines His essence." Yet we are created to know God and must, therefore, strive to increase our knowledge of Him; and in doing this we must make use of words and analogies. Since words are used to signify the names of things, "we can rightly give a name to anything in as far as we can understand it. Now, in this life we cannot see the essence of God; but we know God from creatures as their principle, and also by way of excellence and remotion. In this way, therefore, God can be named by us from creatures, yet not so that the name which signifies Him expresses the Divine Essence in itself. Thus the name man expresses the essence of man in himself, since it signifies the definition of man by manifesting his essence; for the idea expressed by the name is the definition. The reason why God has no name, or is said to be above being named, is because His essence is above all that we understand about God and signify in word." [9]

[9] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 13, a. 1.

Moreover, the same word used to signify a perfection common to God and His creatures, cannot be used in the same sense of both. "Some names there are which express evidently the property of the Divinity, and some which express the clear truth of the Divine Majesty; but others there are which are applied to God metaphorically by way of similitude. . . . Our knowledge of God is derived from the perfections which flow from Him to creatures, which perfections are in God in a more eminent way than in creatures. Now our intellect apprehends them as they are in creatures, and as it apprehends them, it signifies them by names. Therefore, as to the names applied to God, there are two things to be considered, *viz.:* the perfections which they signify, such as goodness, life, and the like; and their mode of signification. As regards what is signified by these names, they belong properly to God, more properly in fact than they belong to creatures, and are applied primarily to Him. But as regards their mode of signification, they do not properly and strictly apply to God; for their mode of signification applies to creatures. There are some names which signify these perfections flowing from

God to creatures in such manner that the imperfect way in which creatures receive the divine perfection is part of the very signification of the name itself, as stone signifies a material thing, and names of this kind can be applied to God only in a metaphorical sense. Other names, however, express these perfections absolutely, without any such mode of participation being part of their signification, as the words being, good, living, and the like, and such names can be literally applied to God." [10]

Bearing in mind the different meanings of the words *being, person, essence, attribute, property,* etc., and their mode of application where used to signify the Supreme Being, let us now study the term which God used to signify Himself, to wit: *"I am who am."* "This sublime truth Moses was taught by the Lord: for when he asked the Lord (Exod. 3, 13 sq.): If the children of Israel should say to me: What is His name? what shall I say to them? The Lord answered: I am who am . . . thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: He who is hath sent me to you; thus declaring His own name to be: HE WHO IS. Now, every

[10] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 13, a. 3.

name is appointed to signify the nature or essence of a thing. It follows that God's very existence itself is His essence or nature. The Catholic doctors have professed this truth. For Hilary says (*De Trin.*) : Existence is not an accident in God, but the subsisting truth, the abiding cause, and the natural property of His essence. And Boethius says that the Divine Substance is existence itself, and all other existence proceeds therefrom." [11]

"The name HE WHO IS is most properly applied to God, for three reasons: first, because of its signification. For it does not signify form, but simply existence itself. Hence, since the existence of God is His essence itself, which can be said of none other, it is clear that among other names this one especially denominates God, for everything is denominated by its form. Secondly, on account of its universality. For all other names are either less universal, or, if comparable with it, add something above it at least in idea; hence in a certain way they inform and determine it. Now, our intellect cannot know the essence of God itself in this life, as it is in itself, but whatever mode it applies in determining what it

[11] St. Thomas *Summa Philosophica,* l. I, c. 22.

understands about God is in Himself. Therefore the less determinate the names are, and the more universal and absolute they are, the more properly are they applied to God. Hence Damascene says, that, HE WHO IS, is the principle of all names applied to God; for comprehending all in itself, it contains existence itself as an infinite and indeterminate sea of substance. Now by any other name some mode of substance is determined, whereas this name HE WHO IS, determines no mode of being, but is indeterminate to all; and therefore it denominates the infinite ocean of substance. Thirdly, from its con-signification, for it signifies present existence; and this above all properly applies to God, whose existence knows not past or future." [12]

God is that Being "who exists from eternity, who is His own essence, and from whom depends the essence or nature of all things." [13] There is then, no growth or development in God. God 'is' in His every act the sum-total of His infinite activity. And God alone *is,* for He alone has not been created or conditioned by any other being. Every being outside of

[12] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 13, a. 11.
[13] Cornelius à Lapide.

God has its origin and preservation from God. All things have originated in time and are limited in their action. However perfect a creature is, it is insignificant compared with the Creator. Even of the most perfect creature in the universe it may be said there is far more "that it is not, than that it is"; consequently, it is more true of any creature to say that it is not, than to say of it that it is. This cannot, however, be said of God, who is infinite in all perfections at every moment of His existence.

"God is an individual, self-dependent, all-perfect, unchangeable Being; intelligent, living, personal, and present; all-mighty, all-seeing, all-remembering; between whom and His creatures there is an infinite gulf; who created and upholds the universe; who is all-sufficient for Himself; who has no origin, who will judge every one of us, sooner or later, according to that moral law of right and wrong which He has written on our hearts." [14]

Since man is endowed with liberty, he can unite himself either to God or to God's enemy —Satan. It is within the power of every individual to follow the path leading to eternal life or the path leading to eternal death. The

[14] Cardinal Wiseman.

never-ending destiny that one chooses or prepares for himself will be given to him.

And since God has appointed a supernatural end and destiny unto man, a purely natural knowledge and love of God, however perfect they may be, is not sufficient. The objective is supernatural, hence the means of securing it must likewise be of the supernatural order. We not only must *know* that God exists, but we must likewise *believe* it, and this by an act of supernatural faith. There is no other way of securing a salutary knowledge of the Supreme Being except by believing in the truths that God has revealed to mankind: "He that cometh to God must *believe* that He is, and is a rewarder of them that seek Him" (Hebr. 11, 6). In these inspired words we are taught that it is impossible to gain possession of God except by believing and hoping in Him in a supernatural manner. We must, then, believe in God by supernatural faith. After learning that God exists, and that He has revealed certain truths, we must accept these truths.

In paradise, we are told, God was wont to converse with Adam in the cool of the evening. That early intercourse between God and man, though intercepted, was never broken off en-

tirely. The revelation of truths by Almighty God to mankind was continued and amplified after Adam's disobedience. This further divine revelation was given chiefly through the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets, when the true religion was in its primitive state, and through Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, and through the Apostles under the New Dispensation. The sum-total of the deposit of faith or of the truths revealed by Almighty God to mankind was completed with the death of the last Apostle.

The preservation and explanation of this blessed message of God to mankind, however, did not cease. The task of teaching the divine revelation was enjoined by Jesus Christ not only upon the Apostles, but also upon their successors in the priesthood; for, previous to His departure into Heaven, He said to them: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you, . . . going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (St. Matthew, 28, 19 sq.).

We can, therefore, neither know nor serve God meritoriously unto life everlasting, unless we attain to a supernatural knowledge of Him through revelation. And this supernatural knowledge is obtainable only by means of supernatural faith, which is a gift of God. "By grace you are saved through *faith,* and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2, 8). Our Lord teaches the same truth in the words: "No man can come to Me, unless it be given him by My Father" (St. John, 6, 66). The virtue of supernatural faith, imparted to the soul in the Sacrament of Baptism, is therefore necessary to get in touch with God and to merit everlasting life with Him in Heaven. "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned" (St. Mark 16, 16). "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebr. 11, 6).

The Almighty Creator of Heaven and earth, has, therefore, communicated truths to mankind. By means of divine grace, which is a supernatural light shed upon our minds, we can believe these truths. Supernatural faith, which is the evidence or "substance of things that appear not," teaches us God's message

unerringly. The Apostle says that "God hath revealed to us by His Spirit, what none of the princes of this world," namely, the philosophers, "knew" (1 Cor., 2, 10). We can, then, secure a more perfect knowledge of God by grace and faith than we can obtain by our unaided reason.

"The knowledge which we have by natural reason contains two things: images derived from the sensible objects; and the natural intelligible light, enabling us to abstract from them intelligible concepts. Now in both of these, human knowledge is assisted by the revelation of grace. For the intellect's natural light is strengthened by the infusion of gratuitous light; and sometimes also the images in the human imagination are divinely formed, so as to express divine things better than do those which we receive from sensible objects, as appears in prophetic vision; while sometimes sensible things, or even voices, are divinely formed to express some divine meaning." [15]

Or, again, to our naked eye the sun and moon appear to be about the same size, and the stars and planets as mere dots of light. Ar-

[15] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 12, a. 13.

tificial aids have brought those distant orbs into closer range, and taught us that this is not the case. For example, by means of the reflector or telescope the surface and topography of the moon have become almost as well known as those of the globe on which we live. Similarly, in the supernatural order, the light of faith reveals a far clearer and more perfect knowledge of God and our relations to Him than does the light of mere reason. Supernatural faith enables us to pierce the clouds and shadows surrounding our eternal destiny and to catch a glimpse of that eternal home prepared for us "before the foundations of the world were laid."

Divine revelation assures us that God "wisheth all men to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved." And in order that we may learn the truths of faith unerringly, God has made the Church the authoritative teacher of mankind. The *one* true Church teaches us infallibly the *one* true religion revealed by the *one* true God. This one true Church is none other than the Catholic Church; for, the Catholic Church is the only divinely appointed and infallible interpreter of God's revelation to mankind. The one true

Church is commanded by God Himself to deliver and explain the truths contained in revelation. "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature; . . . and behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world." If, therefore, we wish to know and serve God, we must "hear the Church."

If we desire to increase our knowledge of God, we must labor at removing that which hinders us from acquiring a firm, constant, and all-embracing faith in the truths that God has revealed. "Knowledge of truth is twofold," says St. Thomas; "one is purely speculative, and pride hinders this indirectly by removing its cause. For the proud man subjects not his intellect to God, that he may receive the knowledge of truth from Him, according to St. Matt. 11, 25, 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent,' *i. e.,* from the proud, who are wise and prudent in their own eyes, and 'hast revealed them to little ones,' *i. e.,* to the humble; nor does the proud man deign to learn anything from man, whereas, it is written (Ecclus. 6, 34): 'If thou wilt incline thy ear, thou shalt receive instruction.' The other knowledge of truth is effective, and

this is directly hindered by pride, because the proud, though delighting in their own excellence, disdain the excellence of truth; thus Gregory says that the proud, although certain hidden things may be conveyed to their understanding, cannot realize their sweetness; and if they know of them, they cannot relish them; hence it is written: 'Where humility, there also is wisdom.' " [16] We must then, ardently desire this higher kind of knowledge and dispose ourselves for it.

The supernatural knowledge of God is the most certain and desirable that can be secured. It imparts to man a "wisdom above all human wisdom; not merely in any order, but absolutely. For since it is the part of a wise man to arrange and to judge, and since lesser matters should be judged in the light of some higher principle, he is said to be wise in any one order who considers the highest principles in that order; thus in the order of building, he who plans the form of the house is called wise and architect as opposed to the inferior laborers [who do the carpenter work and lay the brick or stone]: 'As a wise architect I have laid the foundation' (1 Cor. 3, 10). Again, in

[16] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, qu. 162, a. 3.

the order of all human life, the prudent man is called wise, inasmuch as he directs his acts to a fitting end: 'Wisdom is prudence to a man' (Prov. 10, 23). Therefore, he who considers absolutely the highest cause of the whole universe, namely, God, is most of all called wise. Hence, wisdom is said to be the knowledge of divine things. But sacred doctrine essentially treats of God viewed as the highest cause,—not only so far as He can be known through creatures just as philosophers know him,—'That which is known of God is manifest in them' (Rom. 1, 19), but also as far as He is known to Himself alone and revealed to others. Hence, sacred doctrine is especially called wisdom." [17]

To know God better must be our daily prayer and constant endeavor. The earnest effort to increase one's knowledge of the Supreme Being is equivalent to striving after eternal life, and to do this is to be led by the gift of wisdom. "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (St. John 17, 3). To know God and to love Him with all the powers of our soul should become the ani-

[17] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 1, a. 6.

mating principle of our temporal as well as of our eternal life. Thus will our faith become a source of true joy and delight for time and eternity.

Our knowledge of God, however, can never be perfect and comprehensive. Not even in the world to come shall we be able to learn all that is to be known about the Infinite One; else He would not be infinite. "The formal infinite God . . . is unknown to us by reason of our feeble intellect . . . We cannot know God in our present life except through material effects, and from revelation. In the future life this defect of intellect will be removed by the state of glory, when we shall be able to see the Essence of God Himself, but without being able to comprehend Him." [18]

If at any time, therefore, it behooves us to humble ourselves, it is when we approach the Infinite Source and Author of all things with the purpose of learning more about Him. Let us then humbly and frequently cry out in the words of the Psalmist: "Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me; it is high and I cannot reach it." Without Thy loving light and guidance it will be impossible for me to know

[18] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 86, a. 2.

Thee, O God, the source of all goodness. Deign, then, to assist me with the light of Thy grace that I may know Thee better and love Thee more and more!

CHAPTER III

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

THIS world—the temporal abode of man—is sometimes called a palace. And indeed, when we read the description of creation as described in Genesis—the *Magna Charta* of Man's origin and destiny—the grandeur and immensity of this home of ours warrants the qualification palatial. We read there that man is created in God's image and is appointed to rule over the visible universe as its king. Created for God alone, he is given "dominion over the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the fields." He is then led into a "paradise of pleasure to dress it and to keep it."

But no matter how beautiful and attractive a palace may appear from without, if, upon entering, one hears discordant notes of sorrow, woeful groans and unceasing cries of despair, who would wish to occupy it? Professor Huxley concludes an essay upon this subject thus:

"Since thousands of times a minute, were our ears sharp enough, we should hear sighs and groans of pain like those heard by Dante at the gate of hell, the world cannot be governed by what we call benevolence." (Wallace, *The World of Life,* p. 400). Others, like Schopenhauer, openly and blasphemously ascribe a malevolent will to the almighty Creator of all things.

That the existence of evil in the world is hard to understand is evident, since the difficulty of explaining it is universally referred to as the problem of evil. But to affirm, as is frequently done, that evil is incompatible with the existence of God and His Providence, is asserting too much. And the attempt to explain away human suffering as a "figment" or "an error of the mortal mind" is no less futile than foolish.

No one, I dare say, will venture to deny the fact that there is much physical and moral evil in the world. Alongside of a charming order and symmetry, and in the midst of many and diversified joys, pleasures and delights, there is much that seems to be ill-ordered and discordant. To some minds the physical and moral evils in the world appear to outweigh

its joys and pleasures; consequently, there are those who deny the existence of an all-good and all-wise Creator. Others, who admit the existence of a Supreme Being, deny that there is a Divine Providence.

Now, it may be truthfully asserted that there is enough order and design discernible throughout the visible universe to justify us in calling it the work of an all-wise and Supreme Mind; but can it be said that this all-wise and supreme Ruler actually governs the the world with benevolence? Does God do so at the present time, and has He always directed all things to the good of His creatures? Is the world in which we live a desirable abode for man?

One must not expect to find correct views of human suffering, nor any great effort to alleviate it, among those who have no faith. By the pagans of old, human suffering was considered essentially evil, and hence it was not to be endured willingly under any circumstances. This is why the Stoics of old deemed it unworthy of man to practise sympathy. They taught that compassion is a vice, to be eradicated from the human heart. We need not wonder, therefore, that men with such opinions

recommended the putting to death of all who were doomed to a life of unavoidable suffering. Children, for example, that were born with a grave physical defect were exposed to starvation or fed to beasts of prey; and adults who had become helpless from senility, or some lingering and incurable disease, were either abandoned or ruthlessly put to death. Man, according to the pagan notion, was on earth to indulge his passions, and secure the greatest measure of sensual enjoyment; and when this became entirely impossible, it was thought best to put an end to his miserable and supposedly useless existence.

This view of human suffering is also held by the neo-pagans of to-day. Their attitude towards pain and sorrow is one of rebellion. And why harbor the virtue of compassion or practise acts of mercy, if there is no hereafter? The neo-pagan, who believes that the human soul is mortal and that death ends all, lives solely for this world and its pleasures; consequently, he holds the view that poor-houses, infirmaries, and hospitals, should be abolished and that incurables should be given a deadly potion. Lepers are to be driven out into desert-places and starved to death, or buried alive.

A popular representative of godless science openly approves of such brutality. "Compassion," he writes, "is a sentiment that does harm to the human species because it tends to preserve a crowd of subjects (the blind, the lame, the infirm of all kinds), who disfigure it and retard its progress."

Now, are such men right? Is the human soul mortal? Is man on earth simply to indulge in sensual pleasures, or can he, perhaps, be benefited by suffering, and thus enrich his soul for a higher and eternal life? Let us see.

By Divine Providence is meant Almighty God's care in preserving and governing the world. "Two things belong to Providence—namely, the type of the order of things foreordained towards an end, and the execution of this order, which is called government. As regards the first of these, God has immediate providence over everything, because He has in His intellect the types of everything, even the smallest; and whatsoever causes He assigns to certain effects, He gives them the power to produce those effects. Whence it must be that He has beforehand the types of those effects in His mind. As to the second, there are certain intermediaries of God's prov-

idence; for He governs things inferior by superior, not on account of any defect in His power, but by reason of the abundance of His goodness; so that the dignity of causality is imparted even to creatures." [1]

In order to recognize and understand in a measure the admirable wisdom and goodness of God in governing the world, we must strive to view the visible creation as one complete whole.

In the author's *Our Palace Wonderful* it is shown that the celestial orbs must needs be under the guidance of a Sovereign Ruler, who "has ordered all things in number, measure, and weight." Because of this patent fact we have a fixed standard for reckoning time. Our time-pieces, in order to be correct, must be regulated by the movement of the earth around the sun; so, too, the mariner follows the heavenly bodies as his guide when he directs his course at sea according to the compass and stars. Were these mighty spheres above and around us independent of an all-pervading Providence, it would be impossible for man to calculate or foretell a single eclipse, the transit of a planet, or the path of a comet.

[1] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 22, a. 3.

That the appearance of celestial phenomena can be foretold with the greatest accuracy, is an indisputable proof of the unity of the material universe and of its total dependence upon an all-ruling Providence. There is a harmony of action and purposiveness discernible throughout the entire universe. Nowhere is there any sign of slipshod methods. How admirable the movement of the celestial spheres! Were it not for their wise arrangement and regular movements, we could have no certainty with regard to day and night, or of the alternation of the seasons.

On this earth, too, the tides, ocean currents, atmospheric changes, and other physical phenomena give evidence of a wise and formal order and purpose. The earth has been created by Almighty God, and is now preserved in that distance from the sun, proper declination, and peculiar physiognomy which are required to insure the welfare of its plantal and animal life.

The creeping and winged creatures cooperate in the conservation of the welfare of this planet. Were it not for the birds, those little tillers of the soil—the worms—would soon become too numerous for the common

good. The fowls of the earth furnish food and pleasure. In fact, so long as man does not disturb the balance of nature, all the living creatures of the earth co-operate in attaining the end for which they were created—the welfare of man. "How great are Thy works, O Lord, Thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is filled with Thy riches" (Ps. 103, 24). "All things are subject to Divine Providence, not only in general, but even in their own individual selves. This is made evident thus. For, since every agent acts for an end, the ordering of effects toward that end extends as far as the causality of the first agent extends. Whence it happens that in the effects of an agent something takes place which has no reference towards the end, because the effect comes from a cause other than, and outside the intention of the agent. But the causality of God, who is the first agent, extends to all beings, not only as to the constituent principles of species, but also as to the individualizing principles; not only of things incorruptible, but also of things corruptible. Hence all things that exist in whatsoever manner are necessarily directed by God towards some end; as the Apostle says: 'Those

things that are of God are well ordered' (Rom. 13, 1). Since, therefore, as the providence of God is nothing else than the type of the order of things towards an end, it necessarily follows that all things, inasmuch as they participate existence, must likewise be subject to Divine Providence. God knows all things, both universal and particular; and since His knowledge may be compared to art, all things must of necessity come under His ordering; as all things wrought by art are subject to the ordering of that art." [2]

But is there also a Divine Providence with regard to the animals, and in particular to man? And if so, how can God tolerate the many and various kinds of pain and suffering which we perceive on all sides? Observe, for example, exclaims the materialist, the utter ruthlessness of nature's forces:—droughts, pestilence, earthquakes, inundations, volcanoes, hurricanes, typhoons, and similar catastrophes which bring untold suffering and often death to countless thousands of sentient creatures. Does this fact not militate against the existence of a benevolent Providence?

[2] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 22, a. 2.

Let us endeavor to seek the answer in the light of reason and faith. True, the laws of nature do exhibit a certain callousness in the pursuance of their end; but it is hard to understand how they could manifest regard or sympathy.

"When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
Shall gravitation cease if you pass by?"

Did the physical laws of this world not preserve their integrity, they could not be constant and universal; and this would necessitate frequent interference on the part of their Author. Will anyone deny moreover, that such interceptions as would eliminate pain, want, and fatality on the one hand, and on the other always secure animal pleasure and happiness, must of necessity be incompatible with the nature of a world such as that in which we live? True, the violent atmospheric changes and disturbances on and in the crust of the earth are at times instruments of death and destruction; yet, the harm and damage done by the elements is incomparably less than the benefits they confer.

"To corrupt nature is not the work of Provi-

dence. But it is in the nature of some things to be contingent. Divine Providence imposes necessity upon some things; not upon all, as some formerly believed. For, to Providence it belongs to order things towards an end. Now, after the divine goodness, which is an extrinsic end to all things, the principal good in things themselves is the perfection of the universe; which would not be, were not all grades of being found in things. Whence it pertains to Divine Providence to produce every grade of being. And thus it has prepared for some things necessary causes, so that they happen of necessity; for others contingent causes, that they may happen by contingency, according to the nature of their proximate causes." [3]

Again, it is objected that the manner employed to feed sentient creatures is cruel and ruthless. Observe, for example, the cat; after seemingly torturing its little defenseless victim, it finally devours it alive; does not the fundamental law "eat to be eaten," which pervades the entire realm of irrational creatures, imply much avoidable pain and suffering?

Although the law "eat to be eaten" domi-

[3] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 22, a. 4.

nates the world of irrational animals, still, after the balance has been struck, there is a vast residue of pleasure and happiness. The enormous fecundity of many sentient creatures, for example, the cod, the herring, and some land animals, would seem to indicate that their chief purpose is to live and grow in order to become the nourishment of creatures of a higher order. The power of self-defense is commonly in proportion to an animal's fecundity; thus the preservation of the species is secured by the Creator. Naturalists maintain that the various species of living creatures have each their peculiar task to perform in order to preserve the economy of nature. As the little lichen is intended to convert the black stones and rocks of the mountain side into soil, so is the beetle, *e. g.,* destined to fertilize the soil thus made, and then itself to become the food of a higher kind of creature. The purpose of the lower creatures is to subserve those of higher grades, and all, the animate as well as the inanimate creatures, exist to serve man; for this end the all-wise Creator clothes some of them in winter, and leads others to a warmer climate. Where we find something in nature which appears to be de-

fective or superfluous, we may be certain that, if we take a more thorough and comprehensive view, we shall find it denoting a good of some kind.

"Corruption and defects in natural things . . . are in keeping with the plan of universal nature; inasmuch as the defect in one thing yields to the good of another, or even to the universal good: for the corruption of one is the generation of another; and through this it is that a species is kept in existence. Since God, then, provides universally for all being, it belongs to His providence to permit certain defects in particular effects in order that the perfect good of the universe may not be hindered; for, if all evil were prevented, much good would be absent from the universe. A lion would cease to live, if there were no slaying of animals; and there would be no patience of martyrs if there were no tyrannical persecution. Thus Augustine says (Enchir. II.): 'Almighty God would in no wise permit evil to exist in His works, unless He were so powerful and so good as to produce good even from evil.'" [4]

The pain that the irrational creatures must

[4] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 22, a. 2.

undergo whilst serving their manifold purposes is negligible compared with the pleasure and happiness they get out of life. If they were endowed with intelligence, and were given the choice, beyond doubt they would all prefer life to death. He who observes a school of fish, for example, speeding through the crystal water of an inland lake, or sporting on the crests of the ocean wave, will be struck by their seeming contentment and happiness. The thought will never occur to him that those happy creatures will probably meet with a tragic death, and hence it were better that they had never been created. The same may be said of the care-free life of heaven's choristers, which thrill and cheer us with their melodious strains. And how the multitudinous kinds of animals that inhabit the plain and forest enjoy themselves! They all strive to keep alive as long as possible. Irrational creatures never commit suicide! The reason is evident. What matters it if, after they shall have reached the end of a long (or a short) span of life, they fall victims to the fell blow of an enemy, or suffer the fleeting throes of a natural death?

Moreover, the little pain they may have to suffer from hunger or other extraordinary

causes during life, commonly redounds to their own advantage. The finely developed instinct, the keen sense of sight, smell, and touch, which we admire in various animals, is largely the result of the want and suffering which has fallen to their lot and, at times, menaced their life. Then, too, irrational animals cannot be harassed to any great degree by the recollection of past pain; nor are they capable of mental dread or anguish at impending evil. They suffer in the present only. Mental troubles are entirely beyond the pale of their experience.

Moreover, if certain animals were not to suffer a violent death by being fed upon by others, the sea would have soon become unnavigable and the earth unable to support later generations of higher and more perfect creatures.

But why, if a benevolent Providence governs the world, should brute animals be made to suffer at all? Since God is all-powerful as well as all-good, why does He allow His irrational creatures to suffer? Before entertaining the supposition implied in this question, we ought to be much surer than we ever can be in this world, that it does not involve

an intrinsic contradiction. It would seem that pain and suffering are an intrinsic necessity to sentient creatures. To live means to begin to exist, to attain a certain degree of development, and then to decline, and finally to die. The period of an animal's life on earth, whether long or short, falls between birth and death, and therefore must be made up of both happiness and suffering. Who will deny that, in the vast majority of instances, there is an immense surplus on the side of pleasure and happiness? Then, too, a world of living organisms without any physical evils might entail far greater disadvantages than the world as it is. The capacity, moreover, for physical pleasures in the irrational animals, presupposes a capacity for physical suffering.

Owing to our imperfect knowledge and inability to view the entire creation of God as a whole, we often wonder why this or that evil is allowed to exist. Yet, "the universe, the present creation being supposed, cannot be better, on account of the most beautiful order given to things by God, in which the good of the universe consists. For if any one thing were bettered, the proportion of order would be

destroyed; as when one string is stretched more than it ought to be, the melody of the harp is destroyed." [5]

A loving and all-wise Providence preserves also the vegetable kingdom. True, a swarm of insects, a slight chemical change in an edible root, a hailstorm, a flood, a drought, or a sudden drop in the temperature, may at times effect the starvation of thousands of human beings, and even millions of animals; but let us not lose sight of the beneficent rule to which these calamities are the exception. It is God "who covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth; who maketh grass to grow on the mountains, and herbs for the service of men; who giveth to beasts their food and to the young ravens that call upon Him" (Ps. 146, 8-9). "All expect of Thee that Thou give them food in season. What Thou givest to them they shall gather up; when Thou openest Thy hand, they shall all be filled with good. But if Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled. Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust" (Ps. 103, 27–29). What, after all, are a few poor crops in com-

[5] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. I, qu. 25, a. 6.

parison with innumerable good ones? Moreover, a serious loss in one part of the world is more than counterbalanced by abundant harvests in other lands.

It is, therefore, a sin to declaim against Divine Providence because of the physical evil extant in the world. The Heavenly Father is good towards all His creatures and in particular towards every member of the human family. However, "when we say God is good, the meaning is not, God is the cause of goodness, or God is not evil; but the meaning is, whatever good we attribute to creatures, pre-exists in God, and in a more excellent and higher way. Hence it does not follow that God is good because He causes goodness; but rather, on the contrary, He causes goodness in things because He is good; according to what Augustine says: 'Because God is good, we are.' " [6]

There are those, however, who concede the compatibility of *physical* evil with the existence of an all-good God, and nevertheless maintain that the existence of *moral* evil is repugnant to a benevolent Providence. It is evident that *physical* evils may be and actually are often an incentive to greater effort and per-

[6] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 13, a. 2.

fection. Thus they afford man and brute an opportunity of perfecting themselves. Man is enabled by them to practise certain virtues, which, in the absence of bodily or mental suffering, would be known by name only; and the irrational creatures also are perfected often by physical evils, and thus they serve a good purpose in their regard.

It is not so easy, however, to understand how *moral* evil can or may be advantageous. Moral evil is opposed to that which is morally good. Far from being a help or incentive, moral evil or sin is a hindrance to man's sublime and eternal happiness. Hence, when we contemplate the world, marred and scarred as it is by sin, we are often tempted to doubt whether this kind of evil may in any way come under the providence of an all-holy and all-wise God. And if moral evil is to be ascribed to God, to what extent may this be done?

It is clear to all who reflect that nothing in the moral order can escape the omniscient God. Then, too, God is omnipotent. Therefore nothing can be done by man independently of God's tolerance and concurrence.

God, the Creator and Supreme Lord of the

world, is a moral agent; hence the entire problem of evil is primarily a problem of moral evil. It cannot be denied that God, the supreme Ruler and Director of all things, in some sense freely tolerates moral evil; but it must be denied that He wills the wickedness in moral evil.

However, He does will physical evils in order thereby to effect good. "The evil that accompanies one good, is the privation of another good. Never, therefore, would evil be sought after, not even accidentally, unless the good that accompanies the evil were more desired than the good of which the evil is the privation. Now God wills no good more than He wills His own goodness; yet He wills one good more than another. Hence He in no way wills the evil of sin, which is the privation of right order towards the divine good. The evil of natural defect, or of punishment, He does will, by willing the good to which such evils are attached. Thus in willing justice He wills punishment; and in willing the preservation of the natural order, He wills some things to be naturally corrupted." [7]

The moral evil which concerns man in a

[7] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 19, a. 9.

special sense is that evil which is imputable either to himself, or to some other human being. It is the contrary of moral good, and is applicable only to the actions of rational beings. It is called sin. And the problem of reconciling this kind of evil with Divine Providence cannot be solved without analyzing the nature of man's greatest prerogative—freewill. When the Creator endowed us with liberty, He conferred upon us the faculty of choosing between that which is right and that which is wrong. In this way it was made possible for us to determine our eternal, and, in great measure, our temporal destiny. The faculty of freewill is like the indicator of a scale. By its very nature, it can turn towards God, or away from God. However, unlike the hand of a scale, our freewill is moved from within, and not from without. After weighing the reasons for and against a prescribed course of conduct, the human will, by its own personal and inherent power, inclines either towards what is right or towards what is wrong.

It is precisely this power of choosing either that which is permitted or that which is forbidden, that gives moral responsibility to human acts. That which man does freely in con-

formity with the moral law is called morally good; whilst morally bad is that free action which violates a moral law. In order that an act be moral and responsible it must proceed from man's free will and choice.

"When it is said that God left man to himself, this does not mean that man is exempt from Divine Providence; but merely that he has not a prefixed operating force determined to only the one effect; as in the case of natural things, which are only acted upon as though directed by another towards an end, and do not act of themselves, as if they directed themselves towards an end, like rational creatures, through the possession of free will, by which these are able to take counsel and make a choice. Hence it is significantly said: In the hand of his own counsel. But since the very act of free will is turned to God as to a cause, it necessarily follows that everything happening from the exercise of free will must be subject to Divine Providence. For human providence is included under the Providence of God, as a particular under a universal cause." [8]

By virtue of his free will man is able likewise to exert a good or bad influence on the

[8] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 22, a. 2.

conduct of others. The evils, both physical and moral, occasioned by the wickedness of a single individual are often beyond human calculation. A tyrant like Nero can cause untold bodily suffering to thousands of innocent subjects. The example, too, of such a monster becomes the occasion of many sins in others. The environment created by a despot or oppressor in the political or industrial world, is at times such as to be an all but compelling inducement to sin. Moreover, by preventing the spread of moral and ethical knowledge, an unscrupulous sovereign may become the occasion of sin and vice to millions. Or, again what untold suffering and cruel wrongs might follow in the wake of a war caused by a few unjust and arrogant statesmen.

True, one can always answer, the power to become a benefactor to others is essentially implied in the power to become an oppressor. But why could not the Creator have endowed all men with freedom of will enriched by a certain character, or strengthened by the necessary grace, that would make them morally incapable of committing wrong? Or, why did not God leave these men and women in the realm of non-entity, of whom He foresaw that

they would abuse their liberty, and thus prevent them from plunging themselves and others into temporal or eternal misery? Or, having created them, why did He not cut their earthly career short and thus protect their innocent subjects from harm?

Those who seek an answer to these and similar problems must reconcile the presence of sin with the integrity of God's purpose. It is evident from the instinctive love which all men have of what is good and noble and their innate hatred of what is evil and wicked, that these qualities must have come from the Creator of human nature, for God could not have communicated that which He does not possess. The Author of human nature essentially hates what is evil, and loves what is good; therefore, the *cause* of moral evil or sin cannot be ascribed to Him. However, since we perceive sin to be in a world created and governed by God, we may conclude that He tolerates sin, so far as it is the result of the freedom which He gave to His rational creatures. Still, by God's toleration of the moral evil committed by others, everyone who is well-disposed can attain to greater good than He could have otherwise secured. For

with the aid of divine grace, a man can convert every evil with which he has to cope into a blessing.

Just how the existence of sin and its consequences in the world are compatible with the existence of a loving and all-pervading Providence, is difficult to understand at times; but that they are compatible is beyond all cavil. Let us remember that the counsels of the Almighty are the counsels of infinite knowledge and wisdom, and hence unfathomable. The all-holy Judge of Heaven and earth cannot do wrong. Therefore, we must be satisfied with but a partial knowledge of His inscrutable decrees. Our limited minds cannot compass the infinite, nor can they know all the qualifying circumstances of any one individual human act.

How consoling is the doctrine of Our Lord Jesus Christ on sin and suffering! Our Lord teaches that human suffering, whether bodily or mental, is by no means an unmixed evil. By example and precept He tells us again and again that suffering, in one form or another, is both necessary and advantageous; yes, that it can be made a source of interior joy and supernatural merit: "My yoke is sweet, and my

burden is light." "Knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings of Christ, so shall you be also of the consolation" (2 Cor. 1, 7).

The difficulties of human trials and afflictions cannot be explained satisfactorily without having recourse to the mystery of original sin. The human family, as we know from Revelation, sinned in its first two members, and thus incurred the wrath and punishment of God: "To the woman the Lord God said: I will multiply thy sorrows and thy conceptions; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee, And to Adam He said: Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil thou shalt eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3, 16 sqq.).

Therefore, on account of that sin which

brought desolation into the world we must all suffer. Adam was the divinely appointed social head of the family to which we all belong. Original sin was a family sin; that sin, therefore, with its consequences passed from Adam, "in whom all sinned," upon all mankind. This is why it is called original sin.

Since, in accordance with God's decree, even "the just man" must suffer, surely it is meet that the unjust should suffer. The vast majority of us belong to the unjust and guilt-laden. Or, who is there whose conscience does not reproach him with personal disobedience against God? Often we have made common cause with Satan, and thus personally offended our Heavenly Father; and let us remember that the least moral offense implies a kind of infinite malice. Every sin, no matter how slight it may be, is an offense against the Infinite Majesty of God. The slightest transgression of God's law, therefore, must needs be a greater evil than the punishment with which He visits it. What man then, will dare to deny that he deserves the suffering allotted him for his personal transgressions? We all have sinned, and our Heavenly Father bestows a real favor upon us by punishing us here, thus

enabling us to expiate our sins in this world rather than in the next. It is by many tribulations that we are to secure the "pearl beyond price" promised by Our Lord. That pearl of eternal joy must have temporal trials and afflictions as its setting.

Our Divine Saviour, 'tis true, became a propitiation for the sins of all men. The Innocent Lamb of God allowed Himself to be "bruised for our sins, and wounded for our iniquities." Yet Jesus Christ did not come to abolish suffering, but to sanctify it. Through His merits we can now bear up beneath the weight of our cross, and thus work out our salvation. Jesus has become the meritorious cause of spiritual strength, courage, and consolation. By means of the grace which He gained for us in His sacred passion, we can now convert our every trial and sorrow into a fountain of joy springing up into life everlasting.

Christ's suffering, both in body and in soul, was the greatest that ever fell to the lot of anyone. It more than sufficed to give condign satisfaction and expiation for all the sins of mankind. But it cannot free him from sin who has not "good will": "Peace on earth to men of

good will." Now, the sinner manifests good will by endeavoring to atone for his transgressions by suffering. "Christ's satisfaction works its effect in us, inasmuch as we are incorporated with Him, as the members with their head. Hence, the members must be conformed with their head. Consequently, as Christ first had grace in His soul with bodily passibility, and through the Passion attained to the glory of immortality, so we likewise, who are His members, are freed by His Passion from all debt of punishment, yet so that we first receive in our souls the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby our names are written down for the inheritance of immortal glory while we yet have a passible and mortal body; but afterwards, having been made conformable to the sufferings and death of Christ we are brought into immortal glory, according to the saying of the Apostle (Rom. 8, 17.): 'And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ; yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.' " [9]

There is only one way, therefore, to rise superior to temporal afflictions, and that is to accept them in the spirit of penance. This

[9] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. III, qu. 49, a. 3.

will make them efficacious in removing sin, and render them meritorious unto life everlasting. "To them that love God all things work together unto good." This view of suffering, too, will beget unbounded confidence in the Heavenly Father, who "hateth none of the things He hath made," but on the contrary, hath a tender care of all His children.

God knows, moreover, how to draw good out of evil. Out of the malice and hatred of the Pharisees and the blows of His executioners He wrought our salvation. From the fall and repentance of Peter He raised that Apostle to the highest usefulness of earthly service, and then to martyrdom and heavenly glory. His tender mercy is above all His works. He is far readier to forgive than we are to be forgiven. Mindful of the Heavenly Father's loving care and tender mercy towards us, we should strive to suffer as cheerfully as possible. Trials and afflictions lose their bitterness as soon as we become resigned to them. "The Lord loveth the cheerful giver."

There came a youth unto my door—
  A gentle, winsome boy,—
And on my eager questioning
  He said his name was Joy.

He entered in, and lived with me.
The world seemed like a dream;
And we, as in enchanted boats,
Swept down a fairy stream.

But in the night a spirit came
And whispered: "On the morrow
The Lord of Life will send to thee
His fairest daughter, Sorrow."

So Sorrow came unto my door
And begged that she might stay;
But, though her feet were bruised and torn,
I sent her on her way.

And when Joy saw the passing feet
And noted how they bled,
He turned a-sudden straight from me,
And after Sorrow fled.

And now, with wakened heart, each night
I pray God send me Sorrow;
For if she come, I know that Joy
Will follow on the morrow.

Thomas E. Burke.

CHAPTER IV

UNION WITH GOD

SINCE man is made in the image of God, and "a little less than the angels," he "possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; which aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind . . . which is common to all men."[1] This natural aptitude, however, must be supernaturalized by divine grace, for man has been raised to the supernatural order, and destined for a bliss and happiness *natural* to God alone. Even after one has attained a certain natural goodness or moral perfection, man may still lack that supernatural goodness and perfection which he must acquire in order to become united with God for time and eternity. The principle of this higher kind of moral rectitude is divine grace.

A stone is devoid of life, and for this reason it can grow only from without. A seed or plant possesses the principle of life, and hence

[1] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 93, a. 4.

it can grow from within. A brute animal has a higher kind of life; it is not rooted to the soil like a plant or tree; by means of its superior life it can perceive things, and is able to move from place to place. Man is endowed with a still nobler form of life. Because of his human nature he can learn and do things wholly beyond the capacity of an irrational creature. For example, not even the most cunning and sagacious animals are capable of being taught the use of fire; given all the necessary material, they would freeze to death before any one of them would think of making a fire.

Man is endowed not only by nature with a superior kind of life, but he has been made capable of sharing in the very life of God by adoption. God imparted the supernatural life of divine grace to the first man and woman—Adam and Eve. Moreover, He made Adam the custodian of divine grace and the social head of the human family. However, the gift of supernatural life was bestowed upon Adam and his descendants not absolutely, but conditionally. Our common forefather, when placed on probation, lost the principle of this supernatural life by eating of the forbidden

fruit. Hence, all of Adam's descendants are conceived and born devoid of grace, which is the bond that unites man to God. The sin of Adam, coming down as it does from the very origin of the human family, is called *original* sin. In the case of one soul, and one only, was there an exception made to the universal law of that inherited sin: The Virgin Mary, whom Jesus Christ chose for His mother, was preserved from all stain of sin and created in the state of sanctifying grace. Our Divine Saviour came that we might have supernatural life and have it more abundantly; hence it was meet that His blessed mother be created in the possession of supernatural life. For this reason she is called Immaculately Conceived.

Man is able to inhabit any one of the three stories in the soul. The first story is that of the senses—a habitation wholly unworthy of anyone who has the use of reason; the second story is that of a mere *natural* goodness, which consists in leading a life devoid of grace, yet in conscious conformity with the natural law; the third story is that of supernatural faith and sanctifying grace. The last kind of life is nearest akin to that of the blessed in Heaven.

The man who lives in this higher realm breathes the pure and wholesome air of the celestial paradise. He dwells on earth, but his "conversation is in heaven."

Again we may distinguish a threefold image in man according to the knowledge he has of God: "Man can have a mere natural knowledge of God; and he can actually and habitually know and love God, though imperfectly . . . by the conformity of grace; moreover, man can know and love God perfectly, which is from the likeness and conformity of glory. Wherefore . . . a threefold image may be distinguished in man, of creation, of recreation, and of likeness. The first is found in all men, the second only in the just, the third, only in the blessed." [2] Man, therefore, is to acquire and develop in himself not only all that goes to make him a *naturally* good and perfect man, but must aim at becoming *supernaturally* good and perfect.

In Baptism man becomes endowed with the supernatural life; he then for the first time becomes incorporated into the "living vine"—Jesus Christ. He likewise receives the virtues of faith, hope and charity. With these infused

[2] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 93, a. 4.

supernatural virtues, received in Baptism, we must co-operate. And the way we are to do this is pointed out by our chosen Leader, Jesus Christ. Great are God's gifts in the natural order; those, of the supernatural order however, are incomparably greater. And the greatest of the supernatural gifts of Almighty God to man is that of His only-begotten Son. The mystery of the Incarnation will ever be a cause of wonder to the angels, no less than to man. The strongest proof of love that Abraham could give, was a readiness to sacrifice his dearly beloved and only-begotten child. This is what our Heavenly Father has done for our sake.

And what could this only-begotten Son of the Father have done for us that He did not do? "Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friends." (St. John 15, 13). Yes, there seems to be even a greater love than this, and it consists in sacrificing one's life for *enemies* as well as friends. This is the quality of our Lord's love towards each one of us.

"An act of love always tends towards two things: to the good that one wills, and to the person for whom one wills it, since to love a

person is to wish that person good. Hence, inasmuch as we love ourselves, we wish ourselves good; and, so far as possible, union with that good. So, love is called the unitive force, even in God, yet without implying composition, for the good that He wills for Himself, is no other than Himself, who is good by His essence. And by the fact that anyone loves another, he wills good to that other. Thus he puts the other, as it were, in the place of himself; and regards the good done as done to himself. So far love is a binding force, since it aggregates another to ourselves, and prefers his good to our own. And then again the divine love is a binding force, inasmuch as God wills good to others." [3] If, then, Christ unites Himself to human nature and "dies for *all*" —because "He wishes all to be saved,"—He will likewise give to all of good will sufficient grace to save their soul.

Jesus Christ has revealed the Heavenly Father's will, and has established certain means of salvation as necessary and essential. These must be learned and made use of. No one cometh to the Father save through the Son,

[3] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 20, a. 1.

and one of the necessary means of salvation is Baptism. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." (St. Mark 16, 16). Through Baptism we become adopted children of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ of life everlasting. Now, "a man adopts someone as his son forasmuch as out of goodness he admits him as heir to his estate. God is infinitely good; for which reason He admits His creatures to a participation of good things; especially His rational creatures, who, forasmuch as they are made to the image of God, are capable of Divine beatitude. And this consists in the enjoyment of God, by which also God Himself is happy and rich in Himself,—that is, in the enjoyment of Himself. Now a man's inheritance is that which makes him rich. Wherefore, inasmuch as God, of His goodness, admits men to the inheritance of beatitude, He is said to adopt them. Moreover, Divine exceeds human adoption, forasmuch as God, by bestowing His grace, makes man whom He adopts worthy to receive the heavenly inheritance; whereas man does not make him whom he adopts worthy (to be adopted), but rather

in adopting him he chooses one who is already worthy." [4]

The necessary grace in virtue of which man becomes the adopted child of God and co-heir with Jesus Christ of life everlasting is offered to all men. It is withheld from no one who does not deliberately place an obstacle in the way of it. And once a man is made an adopted child of God in Baptism, he must live in accordance with his vocation and acquire supernatural goodness.

The Christian is called to become conformed to Jesus Christ—the most perfect man in the supernatural, as well as in the natural, order. "No one cometh to the Father but by Me." Christ is the way, the truth, and the life of mankind. Hence union with God, or "the full participation of the divinity, which is the true bliss of man and of human life, is bestowed upon us by Christ's humanity; for Augustine says, 'God was made man, that man might be made God.' This was useful, also, for our withdrawal from evil. First, because man is taught by it not to prefer the devil to himself, not to honor him who is the author of sin; hence Augustine says: 'Since human na-

[4] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. III, qu. 23, a. 1.

ture is so united to God as to become one person, let not these proud spirits dare to prefer themselves to man, because they have no bodies.' Secondly, because we are thereby taught how great is man's dignity, lest we should sully it with sin; hence 'God has proved to us how high a place human nature holds among creatures, inasmuch as HE appeared to men as a true man.' And Pope Leo says in his sermon on Nativity: 'Learn O Christian, thy worth; and, being made a partner of the Divine Nature, refuse to return by evil deeds to your former worthlessness.' " [5] Let us therefore, rejoice in our dignity as Christians. We are the sons of God, co-heirs with Christ, brethren of the angels, and temples of the august Trinity, and therefore, are to become "perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect."

This our dignity is enhanced when we reflect that God the Son and Holy Ghost are sent to man. In order to establish the blessed union between God and man, the Second and Third Persons are sent to man, and all Three—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—take up their abode in him. "The soul is made like

[5] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. III, qu. 1, a. 2.

to God by grace. Hence for a Divine Person to be sent to anyone by grace, there must needs be a likening of the soul to the Divine Person who is sent, by some gift of grace. Because the Holy Ghost is Love, the soul is assimilated to the Holy Ghost by the gift of charity; hence the mission of the Holy Ghost is according to the mode of charity. Whereas the Son is the Word, not any sort of word, but One who breathes forth Love. 'The Word we speak of is knowledge with love,' says Augustine; thus the Son is sent, not in accordance with every and any kind of intellectual perfection, but according to the intellectual illumination, which breaks forth into the affection of love, as is said: 'Everyone that hath heard of the Father and hath learned, cometh to me' (St. John 6, 45). And in Psalm 38, 4, 'in my meditation a fire shall flame forth.' Thus Augustine plainly says: The Son is sent, whenever He is known and perceived by anyone. Now perception implies a certain experimental knowledge; and this is properly called wisdom (*sapientia*) as 'the wisdom of doctrine is according to her name.' (Ecclus. 6, 23).' " [6]

[6] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 43, a. 5.

Though God, therefore, is unspeakably good towards all living creatures, He is particularly good towards the just. "God extends His providence over the just in a certain more excellent way than over the wicked, inasmuch as He prevents anything happening which would impede their final salvation. For 'to them that love God, all things work together unto good' (Rom. 8, 28). But from the fact that He does not restrain the wicked from the evil of sin, He is said to abandon them; not that He altogether withdraws His providence from them; otherwise they would return to nothing, if they were not preserved in existence by His providence." [7] The wickedness of the sinner, however, must be ascribed to himself; whilst the goodness of the just is to be ascribed chiefly to God. "If the communication of the Divine goodness in general be considered, God communicates His goodness without election; inasmuch as there is nothing that does not in some way share in His goodness. But if we consider the communication of this or that particular good, He does not allot it without election; since He gives cer-

[7] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 22, a. 2.

tain goods to some men which He does not give to others. Thus, in the conferring of grace and glory election is implied." [8]

Moreover, things are often far from being that which they seem to be. The very things, *e.g.,* that are looked upon by the wayward as unmixed evils to themselves, often turn out to be the means of their salvation. What a blessed thing it was, *e.g.,* for the penitent thief that he had been made to suffer severe pain and abandonment. The anguish and dereliction he endured wrung from him the contrite prayer of hope: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." "The will of God is the universal cause of all things. . . . that which seems to depart from the Divine will in one order, returns into it in another order; as does the sinner, who by sin falls away from the Divine will as much as lies in him, yet falls back into the order of that will, when by its justice he is punished." [9] Thus the anguish of mind and pain of body that the now penitent outlaw had to endure, under a loving Providence, became for him an efficacious means of salvation. "We," he ex-

[8] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 23, a. 4.
[9] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 19, a.6.

claims, "are receiving the just reward of our iniquities." And this perfect resignation to the Divine will under just punishment disposed him for the grace of penitence and salvation. "An humble and contrite heart the Lord will not despise." "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." God is always good and merciful, even towards the greatest sinners. He is ever the all-good God, radiating His loving kindness and mercy into every nook and corner of the globe, yea, even into the most hidden folds of the human heart.

When God sends the sinner suffering of any kind, it is always out of love and mercy that He does this: "Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?" (Rom. 2, 4). By thus inciting the wayward man to sorrow and contrition God seeks to save him. In some cases it may require years of suffering or various kinds of chastisements to bring about the necessary change of heart. What untold remorse and anguish of heart were endured by St. Augustine, St. Mary of Egypt, St. Margaret of Cortona, and others. And who will deny that their qualms of conscience and mental anguish were the very best form of punishment that God could have ad-

ministered to those whom we now revere as penitents and saints of God. By such means He succeeded in bringing back to Himself many a one who had abandoned Him. The holy penitents who are now enjoying eternal happiness hearkened to God's warning voice and learned to kiss the Hand that chastised them.

Still God's mercy and longanimity are sometimes abused and despised, as they were in the case of Judas Iscariot. It is this sin of obduracy or contempt of God's goodness, more than aught else, which makes the punishment of the damned so dreadful. Ah, with what tenderness the Heavenly Father pursues His wayward children in this life! The consciousness of having abused so much love and mercy during the time of their probation on earth is the severest torture endured by the reprobate souls. Not even the greatest sinner has the slightest reason to doubt that God wishes his salvation. So long as one is still in this world there is hope! God is merciful, as well as just. Yea, His mercy is above all His works. His intense love extends even to adamantine hearts. It is manifested in the reproofs of conscience which follow upon sin; and again in the

needed rest for prayer and interior recollection consequent on an accident or bodily infirmity. At times it is active in the impelling force of His word, which like a keen-edged sword is able to separate the very core of the heart from that which is sinful. But most of all is God's tender mercy manifested in the streams of grace that constantly flow into the souls of men from the Sacraments of the Church. Hence, if anyone, no matter who or what he is, does not live and die in union with the all-good God, it is due chiefly to his own negligence, indifference, and perverse will. For "God wisheth all men to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved."

But, one might be tempted to object, if God knows all things, if He can do all things, and if He is all-good, then why not leave our eternal salvation entirely to Him? What need is there of mortification? Why lead a virtuous life? We must take pains to avoid evil and do good because our eternal destiny depends upon it. We are in this world "to work out our salvation." True, our salvation depends largely upon divine grace; and this again upon the goodness, mercy, and fore-knowl-

edge of God; but the fore-knowledge of God does not destroy liberty of the will, or determine eternal destiny.

"Whoever knows a contingent effect in its cause only, has merely a conjectural knowledge of it. Now God knows all contingent things not only as they are in their causes, but also as each one of them is actually in itself. And although contingent things become actual successively, nevertheless God knows contingent things not successively, and as they are in their own being, as we do, but simultaneously. The reason is because His knowledge is measured by eternity, as is also His being; and since eternity is simultaneously whole it comprises all time. Hence, all things that are in time are present to God from eternity, not only because He has the types of things present within Him, but because His glance is carried from eternity over all things as they are in their presentiality. It is manifest, therefore, that contingent things are infallibly known by God, inasmuch as they are subject to the divine sight in their presentiality; yet they are future contingent things in relation to their own causes." [10]

[10] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 14, a. 13.

To illustrate: he who travels along the road cannot simultaneously see the people who are preceding him and those who are following him; whereas he who sees the whole road from a height, sees at once all who are traveling along that road. And were the observer independent of time and space, and possessed of strong enough vision, he would be able to see all the travelers—past, present, and future—on that road. The fact that he observes some of them obstinately pursuing the wrong direction does not oblige them to do this. It is possible, too, that no persuasion on his part could induce these to change their course. Even when told "the error of their ways," some at least would continue in the wrong direction. They might even maintain that they wished and desired to reach a certain destination, and yet, on some pretext or other, stubbornly insist on going away from, instead of towards, that goal.

Thus in matters that pertain to our moral life and eternal destiny, how many a one maintains that he desires to save his soul, and yet, his daily life disproves his utterance! He is told that the only way leading towards the realm of eternal bliss is the one pointed out by

Jesus Christ, and still he persistently refuses to follow this path. His intention to reach Heaven never becomes more than an empty velleity. Virtually he decides not to resolve to save his soul, and thus he loses the way to salvation and arrives at the portals of hell.

May such folly and blindness be accounted for perhaps by predestination? Does God create and predestine certain souls for hell, and others for Heaven? Does He enlighten some, and keep others in darkness? Certainly not! True, God cannot do otherwise than conduct or predestine those heavenward who will actually arrive at that blessed goal; for this cannot be effected without grace, and grace is something over and above all the needs and exigencies of human nature.

"It is fitting that God should predestine men; for all things are subject to His Providence. Now it belongs to Providence to direct things towards their end. The end towards which created things are directed by God is twofold; one which exceeds all proportion and faculty of created nature; and this end is life eternal that consists in seeing God, which is above the nature of every creature. The other end, however, is proportionate to

created nature, to which end a created being can attain according to the power of its nature. Now if a thing cannot attain to something by the power of its nature, it must be directed thereto by another; thus, an arrow is directed by the archer towards a mark. Hence, properly speaking, a rational creature, capable of life eternal is led towards it, directed, as it were, by God. The reason of that direction pre-exists in God; as in Him is the type of the order of all things towards an end. Now the type in the mind of the doer as something to be done, is a kind of pre-existence in him of the thing to be done. Hence the type of the aforesaid direction of a rational creature towards the end of eternal life is called predestination. For to destine, is to direct or send. Thus it is clear that predestination, as regards its objects, is a part of Providence." [11]

To this predestination on the part of Providence there must correspond in the individual a willingness, yea, an ardent desire and actual effort to be saved. And, since "God wisheth all men to be saved," He offers all men sufficient grace to desire their salvation. Where such a desire actually exists, the means

[11] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 23, a. 1.

of salvation will not be neglected; and the man who endeavors earnestly to save his soul, will be saved and obtain Heaven as a reward. "I will be thy reward exceeding great."

The foreknowledge, therefore, which the omniscient God has of our free and deliberate actions, does not deprive anyone of his moral liberty. "From the beginning" God "made man free." As human beings we possess liberty of will. At all times we are able to disobey God, and damn our soul, or we can choose to do the will of God and thus work out our salvation. God never forces man to do that which is contrary to moral liberty and the dictates of his conscience. The wickedness in a human act is to be ascribed to the individual who makes himself guilty of it. The sun illumines all who are exposed to it, but it does not compel anyone to enter the light it sheds. So the benign light of reason and faith is offered to all men, but it does not compel anyone to follow its counsel and guidance. Nor does God allow anyone to be tempted beyond his strength. When He permits man to be tempted, He also offers him the necessary grace to overcome, and thus He makes with temptation issue. For God "wishes all men to

come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved."

In fact, God leaves nothing undone to secure man's salvation. He is more desirous of our salvation than we are. To be obliged to live under a king who has the power to make and unmake laws, is often the source of untold evils to his subjects. For a human superior can misuse his freewill, and consequently also the legislative or executive authority that he has from God. This cannot be affirmed of God—the King of kings. Although God has supreme power over all men without exception, He strives always and ever to promote our temporal and eternal welfare. His laws proceed from the purest love of our real good. The commandments have our true welfare as their end and purpose. They are, as it were, guideposts along the road to Heaven. The all-good God has given them for our benefit. Just as the sun cannot gain anything by lighting up the earth and promoting plant and animal life, so God cannot gain anything by pouring out the light of His grace upon mankind. He is, and always has been, infinitely happy. Hence, whatever God does for us, is done by reason of his goodness and mercy.

The loving Providence of God may not always be clearly discernible; still it exists, and all things are subject to it. That which seems unintelligible to the unbeliever, often furnishes evidence of an all-ruling guidance to the man of faith. "Although as a consequence of sin and free will, God seems to permit countless disorders, chiefly in human affairs, yet He permits nothing except for a supreme reason, and if we may so express ourselves, without previous deliberation. Moreover, what appears to be disorder will be cited before His tribunal and judged according to the laws of rigid justice, and by his decree it will be made to re-enter into the most perfect and exquisite order. All the order that exists either in the structure of the universe, or in the organism of plants and animals, or in the acts of creatures, or in the means they employ to accomplish the purpose of their existence, —and this is true of all creatures, spiritual as well as corporeal—has been made and established by the hand of God, and is the work of His Divine Providence." [12]

Often the transcendent wisdom everywhere present cannot be understood and appreciated

[12] Lessius, S.J.,—Campbell, S.J., *Names of God,* p. 81.

by us on account of our limited knowledge and understanding. We cannot expect to be able in this world to understand fully the boundless mercy and goodness of God as manifested in the distribution of supernatural gifts.

That it behooves God to give to some more grace than others, must be clear to all. When contemplating the goodness of God in the economy of divine grace, it is well to remember that the "goodness of anything is twofold; one, which is of the essence of it; thus, for instance, to be rational pertains to the essence of man. As regards this good, God cannot make a thing better than it is, although He can make another thing better than it: even as He cannot make the number four greater than it is, because if it were greater, it would no longer be four, but another number. For the addition of a substantial difference in definitions is after the manner of the addition of unity in numbers. Another kind of goodness is that which is over and above the essence; thus, the good of a man is to be virtuous or wise. As regards this kind of goodness, God can make better the things He has made." [13]

In order, however, the better to understand

[13] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, 2, qu. 25, a. 6.

the divine goodness and mercy, we must take as comprehensive a view as possible of the moral order established by God. "Let us consider the whole human race," says the Angelic Doctor, "as we consider the whole universe. God wills to manifest His goodness in men; in respect to those whom He predestines, by means of His mercy, in sparing them; and in respect of others, whom he reprobates, by means of His justice, in punishing them. That is the reason why God elects some and rejects others. To this the Apostle refers, saying: What if God, willing to show His wrath (that is, the vengeance of His justice), and to make His power known, endured (that is, permitted) with much patience vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction; that He might show the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He hath prepared unto glory (2 Tim. 2, 20)? In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver; but also of wood and of earth; and some, indeed, unto honor; but some unto dishonor. Yet why He chooses some for glory and reprobates others, has no reason, except the Divine Will. Whence Augustine says (Tract. in Joan.,

xxvi): 'Why He draws one, and another He draws not, seek not to judge, if thou dost not wish to err.' Thus too, in the things of nature, a reason can be assigned, since primary matter is altogether uniform, why one part of it was fashioned by God from the beginning under the form of fire, another under the form of earth, that there might be a diversity of species in things of nature. Yet why this particular part of matter is under this particular form, and that under another, depends upon the simple will of God; as from the simple will of the artificer it depends that this stone is in this part of the wall, and that in another; although the plan requires that some stones should be in this place, and some in that place. Neither on this account can there be said to be injustice in God, if He prepares unequal lots for not unequal things. This would be altogether contrary to the notion of justice, if the effect of predestination were granted as a debt, and not gratuitously. In things which are given gratuitously a person can give more or less, just as he pleases (provided he deprives nobody of his due), without any infringement of justice. This is what the master of the house

said: 'Take what is thine, and go thy way. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will?' " (Matt. 20, 14, 15).[14]

The gift of divine grace which effects the blessed union between God and man is a permanent quality of the soul, imparting to it a "beauty, which wins the divine love." It is an effect of God's gratuitous will that renders the soul just and holy. "Man is aided by God's gratuitous will in two ways: first, inasmuch as man's soul is moved by God to know or will to do something, and in this way the gratuitous effect in man is not a quality, but a movement of the soul; for motion is the act of the mover in the moved. Secondly, man is helped by God's gratuitous will, inasmuch as an habitual gift is infused by God into the soul; and for this reason, that it is not fitting that God should provide less for those He loves that they may require supernatural good, than for creatures, whom He loves that they may acquire natural good. Now He so provides for natural creatures, that not merely does He move them to their natural acts, but He bestows upon them certain forms and powers, which are the principles of acts, in order that

[14] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. I, qu. 23, a. 6.

they may of themselves be inclined to these movements, and become natural and easy to creatures, according to Wis. 8, 1, 'she . . . ordereth all things sweetly.' Much more, therefore, does He infuse into such as He moves by supernatural qualities, whereby they may be moved by Him sweetly and promptly to acquire eternal good; and thus the gift of grace is a quality. Grace, as a quality, is said to act upon the soul, not after the manner of an efficient cause, but after the manner of a formal cause, as whiteness makes a thing white, and justice, just." [15]

In order to bring about this marvelous transformation, and effect a union with the human soul, the Triune God—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—enter and occupy it as if it were a temple. "The whole Trinity dwells in the mind by sanctifying grace, according to the words, 'we will come to him, and will make our abode with him' (St. John 14, 23). But that a Divine Person be sent to anyone by invisible grace signifies both that this Person dwells in a new way within him and that He has His origin from another. Hence, since both to the Son and to the Holy

[15] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 1, qu. 110, a. 2.

Ghost it belongs to dwell in the soul by grace, and to be from another, it therefore belongs to both of them to be invisibly sent. As to the Father, though He dwells in us by grace, still it does not belong to Him to be from another." [16] What a sublime dignity, then, is conferred upon man when he is through Baptism made a living tabernacle of the living God!

Once in possession of a certain degree of divine grace or charity, man can merit an increase of this blessed good. "Charity merits increase, and being increased, merits to be perfected. Hence the increase of grace or charity falls under merit. Whatever the motion of grace reaches to, falls under condign merit. For the motion of a mover extends not merely to the last term of the movement, but to the whole progress of the movement. But the term of the movement of grace is eternal life; and progress in this movement is by the increase of charity or grace according to Prov. 4, 18: 'But the path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day; which is the day of glory. And

[16] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 2, a. 3.

thus the increase of grace falls under condign merit." [17]

How consoling the consciousness that with regard to the amount to be gained by us there is no limit to the increase of divine grace, since a constant increase of this greatest of God's gifts can be merited by us. "Charity considered as such has no limit to its increase, since it is a participation of the infinite charity which is the Holy Ghost. In like manner the cause of the increase of charity, *viz.,* God, is possessed of infinite power. Furthermore, on the part of its subject, no limit to this increase can be determined because whenever charity increases, there is a corresponding increased ability to receive more grace. It is, therefore, evident that it is not possible to fix any limits to the increase of charity in this life." [18] Thus, though we are poor and helpless of ourselves, we can become rich in God through His loving kindness and our own endeavor. The more divine grace is increased in us, the more will the bond of union with God be strengthened. This unitive principle is sometimes called ha-

[17] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 1, qu. 114, a. 8.
[18] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 24, a. 7.

bitual grace because it is a habit, or power infused into the soul.

Now, "habits can have a double magnitude, one, as regards the end or object, as when a virtue is said to be more noble through being ordained to greater good; the other on the part of the subject, which more or less participates in the habit inhering to it. As regards the first magnitude, sanctifying grace cannot be greater or less, since, of its nature, grace joins man to the Highest Good, which is God. But as regards the subject, grace can receive more or less, inasmuch as one may be more perfectly enlightened by grace than another. And a certain reason for this is on the part of him who prepares himself for grace; since he who is better prepared for grace, receives more grace. Yet it is not here that we must seek the first cause of this diversity, since man prepares himself only inasmuch as his free-will is prepared by God. Hence the first cause of this diversity is to be sought on the part of God, who dispenses His gifts of grace variously, in order that the beauty and perfection of the Church may result from these various degrees; even as He instituted the various conditions of things, that the universe might be

perfect. Hence, after the Apostle has said (Eph. 4, 7), "to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ," having enumerated the various graces, he adds: "For the perfecting of the saints . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ." [19] The blissful union between God and the soul, which is effected by supernatural grace, is, therefore, to become more and more perfect throughout our entire life here on earth.

"We are called wayfarers by reason of our being on the way to God, who is the last end of our happiness. In this way we advance as we get nigh to God, who is approached not by steps of the body but by the affections of the soul; and this approach is the result of charity, since it unites man's mind to God. Consequently, it is essential to the charity of a wayfarer that it can increase, for if it could not, all further advance along the way would cease. Hence, the Apostle calls charity the way, when he says (1 Cor. 12, 31): 'I show unto you yet a more excellent way.' " [20]

Now, where charity or supernatural love is,

[19] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 1, qu. 112, a. 4.
[20] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 24, a. 4.

there also is sanctifying grace. The two are inseparable. Their growth, too, is simultaneous and proportionate. Divine grace, however, does not increase after the manner of a material substance. "Bodily quantity has something as quantity, and something else, so far as it is an accidental form. As quantity, it is distinguishable in respect of position or number, and in this way we have the increase of magnitude by addition, as may be seen in animals. But in so far as it is an accidental form, it is distinguishable only in respect of its subject, and in this way it has its proper increase, like other accidental forms, by way of intensity in its subject, for instance, in things subject to rarefaction. In like manner science, as a habit, has its quantity from its objects, and accordingly it increases by addition, when a man knows more things; and again, as an accidental form, it has a certain quantity through being in its subject, and in this way it increases in a man who knows the same scientific truths with greater certainty now than before. In the same way charity has a twofold quantity; but with regard to that which it has from its object, it does not increase: hence it follows that

it increases solely by being intensified." [21]

How divine grace, and, consequently, the wondrous union between God and the just, increases, is explained more fully by the Angelic Doctor thus: "The infusion of charity denotes a change to the state of having charity from the state of not having it, so that something must needs come which was not there before. On the other hand, the increase of charity denotes a change to more having from less having, so that there is need, not for anything to be there that was not there before, but for something to be more there than previously was less there. This is what God does when He increases charity, that is, He makes it to have a greater hold on the soul, and the likeness of the Holy Ghost to be more perfectly participated by the soul." [22]

"Charity increases only by its subject's partaking of charity more and more, *i. e.,* by being more reduced to its act and more subject thereto. For this is the proper mode of increase in a form that is intensified, since the being of such a form consists wholly in its adhering to

[21] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 24, a. 5.
[22] *Ibid.*

its subject. Consequently, since the magnitude of a thing follows on its being, to say that a form is greater is the same as to say that there is more in its subject, and not that another form is added to it. Therefore charity increases by being intensified in its subject, and that is for charity to increase in its essence; and not by charity being added to charity." [23]

Our one endeavor must, therefore, be to become more intimately united with God by means of sanctifying grace and charity. We need but sustain the desire that we grow in divine grace and remain united to God always, by avoiding sin. But how can we know that such a blessed union between God and us actually exists, or that it is becoming more perfect? The Angelic Doctor answers thus: "Things are known conjecturally by signs; and thus anyone may know he has grace when he is conscious of delighting in God, and of despising worldly things, and inasmuch as one is not conscious of any mortal sin. For it is written (Apoc. 2, 17) : 'To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna, . . . which no man knoweth but he that receiveth

[23] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 24, a. 5.

it,' because whoever receives it knows, by experiencing a certain sweetness, which he who does not receive it, does not experience. Yet this knowledge is imperfect; hence the Apostle says (1 Cor. 4, 4): 'I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified,' since, according to Ps. 18, 13, 'who can understand sins?' 'From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare Thy servant.' " [24]

Hence, though we are "to work out our salvation in fear and trembling," yet we can secure the moral certitude that we are free from grievous sin, and united to God. We cannot, then, advance on the way Godward without having an ardent desire to avoid sin and to increase our store of grace. "Man advances in the way to God, not merely by actual increase of charity, but also by being disposed to that increase." [25] "Every act of charity merits everlasting life, which, however, is not to be bestowed then and there, but at its proper time. In like manner every act of charity merits an increase of charity; yet this increase does not take place at once, but when we strive for that

[24] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 1, qu. 112, a. 5.
[25] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 24, a. 6.

increase." [26] And we strive for this increase by desiring to advance in holiness and thus to strengthen the bond of union with God.

But, one might object, such a life and destiny is possible only for those who are predestined to be united to God in eternity. Perhaps it is impossible for me to become one of that blessed number! Let us see: "Predestination may be considered on the part of that to which anyone is predestined, and this is the term and effect of predestination. In this sense Christ's predestination is the exemplar of ours, and this in two ways: first, in respect to the good to which we are predestined; for He was predestined to be the natural Son of God, whereas we are predestined to the adoption of sons, which is a participated likeness of natural sonship. Whence it is written (Rom. 8, 29): 'whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son'; secondly, in respect of the manner of obtaining this good, that is, by grace. This is most manifest in Christ, because human nature in Him, without any antecedent merits, was united to the Son of God. And 'of His ful-

[26] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. II, 2, qu. 24, a. 6.

ness we all have received' (St. John 1, 16)." [27]

"The sonship of adoption is a certain likeness of natural sonship. Now the Son of God proceeds naturally from the Father as the Intellectual Word, in oneness of nature with the Father. To this Word, therefore, something may be likened in three ways. First, on the part of the form, but not on the part of its intelligibility; thus the form of a house already built is like the mental word of the builder in its specific form, but not in intelligibility, because the material form of a house is not intelligible, as it was in the mind of the builder. In this way every creature is like the Eternal Word: since it was made through the Word. Secondly, the creature is likened to the Word, not only as to its form, but also as to its intelligibility: thus the knowledge that is begotten in the disciple's mind is likened to the word in the mind of the master. In this way the rational creature, even in its nature, is likened to the Word of God. Thirdly, a creature is likened to the Eternal Word, as to the oneness of the Word with the Father, which is by reason of grace and charity: wherefore our Lord

[27] *Summa Theologica,* P. III, qu. 24, a. 3.

prays (St. John 17, 21 sq.) 'that they may be one in US . . . as We also are one.' And this likeness perfects the adoption: for to those who are thus like Him, the eternal inheritance is due. It is, therefore, clear that, to be adopted belongs to the rational creature alone; not indeed to all, but only to those who have charity, which 'is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost (Rom. 5, 8)': for which reason (Rom. 5, 15) the Holy Ghost is called 'the Spirit of adoption of sons.' "[28] This charity, therefore, "which is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," making us sons of God and heirs to life everlasting, must be preserved and increased by us. The union between God and us, effected in Baptism, must, with the aid of divine grace, become stronger and closer from day to day.

The soul that lives in union with God by means of sanctifying grace or supernatural charity possesses all the perfect virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. These supernatural gifts and virtues are necessarily active and fruitful in the sanctified soul: "Charity cannot remain inactive, since it is itself the ultimate form of the virtues, by reason of its re-

[28] *Summa Theologica,* P. III, qu. 23, a. 3.

garding God under the aspect of its last end." [29] Therefore, he who leads a life under the sweet influence of charity and its accompanying virtues, has but one master—God, "whom to serve is to reign."

Little wonder, then, that the zealous Christian who has been elevated to the supernatural order and endeavers to approach God ever more closely, becomes more and more godlike. Nor need we be surprised that the soul of the just, because of its intimate union with God, will experience an interior joy and peace of which a man in the state of sin and animated by the spirit of the world can have no conception.

He who is in the state of grace and advances Godward, is sure to obtain a greater knowledge of God. The consciousness of the abiding presence and friendship of God sheds rays of heavenly light upon the soul. Just as the sense of guilt and separation from God fills the soul with gloom, and at times converts this life into a kind of hell, so will the abiding presence of God shed light and joy in the soul of the just, and the brightness of this light will become a perennial source of the true knowledge of

[29] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, qu. 24, a. 12.

God. "The love of duty, makes of a man a good man; his love of science, a genius; his love of glory, a hero; his love of God, a saint," says Père Eymard. "He who keeps God in mind," says St. Ephrem, "will become like an angel on earth."

It is our duty, therefore, and not a matter of whim or fancy, to think of God frequently and strive to love Him more and more. And since we have the duty to keep God in mind and heart, we ought to acquire the habit of doing so. To think of God always is neither possible nor necessary; still, we are remiss when we neglect to think of God habitually; for we are commanded "to think on God in all [our] ways," and by so doing, we are assured that He "will direct our steps" and lead us to temporal and eternal happiness. We should look upon this foremost duty of ours as a blessed privilege and favor granted us by our Heavenly Father.

Of all human pursuits that which leads Godward is the most satisfying. It is to follow the path outlined by the gift of the Holy Ghost called wisdom; and this pursuit "is the most perfect, the most sublime, the most profitable, the most delightful. It is the most per-

fect, since in proportion as a man devotes himself to the pursuit of wisdom, so much does he already share in true happiness. "Blessed is the man that shall continue in wisdom" (Ecclus. xiv, 22). It is the most sublime, because thereby especially does man approach to a likeness to God, who made all things in wisdom: wherefore since likeness is the cause of love, the pursuit of wisdom especially unites man to God by friendship: hence it is said (Wis. vii, 14), 'wisdom is an infinite treasure to men; which they that use, become the friends of God.' It is the most profitable, because by wisdom itself man is brought to the kingdom of immortality, for 'the desire of wisdom bringeth to the everlasting kingdom' (Wis. vi, 21). And it is the most delightful, because 'her conversation hath no bitterness nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness' (Wis. viii, 16)." [30]

[30] St. Thomas, *Summa Philosophica,* l. 1, c. 2.

CHAPTER V

REUNION WITH GOD

THE spiritual union between God and man effected by divine grace can be weakened, and even destroyed by sin. Sin may be inherited or personal. All men are conceived in original sin. "By one man sin came into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned." We are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2, 3). Man is freed from that inherited or original sin by Baptism, whether it is the Baptism of water, of desire, or of blood.

Personal or actual sin arises from an abuse of freewill. It is a deliberate transgression of a law of God, and implies pride, ingratitude, and disobedience. Sin always proceeds from an inordinate love of self. The sinner, from a selfish motive, chooses a temporal good rather than an eternal good. "The proper and direct cause of sin is to be considered on the part of the adherence to a mutable good; in which

respect every sinful act proceeds from inordinate desire for some temporal good. Now the reason why anyone desires a temporal good inordinately, is due to the fact that he loves himself inordinately; for to wish anyone some good is to love him. Therefore it is evident that inordinate love of self is the cause of every sin." [1] Sin, then, is an act of selfishness.

Though the principal motive of sin is self-love, this inordinate love of self may have diverse causes or motives. "Man is said to love both the good he desires for himself, and himself to whom he desires it. Love, so far as it is directed to the object of desire, admits, as an alternative cause, fear, which pertains to avoidance of evil, for every sin arises either from inordinate desire for some good or from inordinate avoidance of some evil. But each of these is reduced to self-love, since it is through loving himself that man either desires good or avoids evil things." [2] Every kind of sin or inordinate self-love, is therefore, blameworthy and culpable in one. "Those who love themselves [inordinately] are to be blamed, so far as they love themselves in regard to their sen-

[1] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 77, a. 4.
[2] *Ibid.*

sitive nature, which they humor. This is not to love oneself truly according to one's rational nature, so as to desire for oneself the good things which pertain to the perfection of reason." [3]

When obliged to act morally, man must choose one or the other,—that which is in accordance with the dictates of reason and faith, or that which is contrary thereto. For he "is placed between the things of this world and spiritual goods, wherein eternal happiness consists; the more he cleaves to the one, the more he withdraws from the other, and conversely. Therefore, he that cleaves wholly to the things of this world, so as to make them his end and the reason and rule of all he does, falls away altogether from spiritual goods. Nevertheless, for man to gain eternal happiness, he does not need to renounce the things of the world altogether, since he can, while using the things of this world, attain to eternal happiness, provided he does not place his end in them." [4] He, therefore, who acts contrary to the dictates of reason or faith in using the things of this world becomes guilty of sin; and

[3] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 25, a. 4.
[4] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 1, qu. 108, a. 4.

whether the sin committed is small or great, venial or mortal, it always implies guilt, and, consequently, deserves punishment. Sin is always an evil to him who commits it. No personal or actual sin can be of real and lasting advantage to the sinner; nor can anyone lay claim to nobility of mind or heart who sins habitually and thus blurs or effaces the image that God has stamped upon his soul.

Mortal sin is a complete turning away from God. He who offends God in a grievous matter or manner loses sanctifying grace and thus separates himself entirely from God. The soul of the sinner consequently ceases to be illumined by divine grace. "Just as the light would cease at once in the air, were an obstacle placed to its being lit up by the sun, even so charity ceases at once to be in the soul through the placing of an obstacle to the outpouring of charity by God into the soul. Now, it is evident that through every mortal sin . . . an obstacle is placed to the outpouring of charity, since from the very fact that a man chooses to prefer sin to God's friendship, which requires that we should obey His will, it follows that the habit of charity is lost at once through one mortal sin. Hence Augustine

says that man is enlightened by God's presence, but he is darkened at once by God's absence, because distance from Him is effected not by change of place but by aversion of the will." [5]

Blindness of mind and obduracy of heart in regard to the higher and nobler things of life, are sure to follow in the wake of sin. "The perfect intellectual operation in man consists in an abstraction from sensible phantasms, wherefore the more a man's intellect is freed from these phantasms, the more thoroughly will it be able to consider things intelligible, and set in order all things sensible. Now it is evident that pleasure fixes a man's attention on that which he takes pleasure in: wherefore we all do best that which we take pleasure in doing, while as to other things, we do them either not at all, or in faint-hearted fashion. . . . Now, carnal vices, namely, gluttony and lust, are concerned with pleasures of touch in matters of food and sex; and these are the most impetuous of all pleasures of the body. Hence these vices cause man's attention to be very firmly fixed on corporeal things, so that in consequence man's operation in regard to intelligible things is weakened, more, how-

[5] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 24, a. 12.

ever, by lust than by gluttony, for sexual pleasures are more vehement than those of the table. Therefore, lust gives rise to blindness of mind, which excludes almost entirely the knowledge of spiritual things, while dullness of sense arises from gluttony, which makes a man weak in regard to the same intelligible things. On the other hand, the contrary virtues, *viz.*, abstinence and chastity, dispose man very much to the protection of intellectual operation. Hence it is written (Dan. 1, 17) that to those children, on account of their abstinence and continency, 'God gave knowledge and understanding in every book, and wisdom.'

"Although some who are the slaves of carnal vices are at times capable of subtle considerations about intelligible things, on account of the perfection of their natural genius, or of some habit superadded thereto, nevertheless on account of the pleasures of the body, it must needs happen that their attention is frequently withdrawn from this subtle contemplation: and therefore the unclean can know some truths, but their uncleanness is a clog on their knowledge." [6] How, then, can anyone obtain a clear knowledge of that in which he

[6] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 15, a. 3.

is not interested? The sinner is immersed in the things of time and cares little for the things of eternity. Because he unduly appreciates the things of the body, he undervalues the things of the soul.

Another sad consequence of sin is the destruction of past merits. No matter how great a treasure a man may have "laid up in Heaven," he loses it all the moment he commits a grievous offense against God. Mortal sin cancels all past merits. "All the justices which [the sinner] hath done shall not be remembered" (Ezech. 18, 24).

Nor is it possible to merit anything unto life everlasting so long as one is separated from God through sin. Such a man has "the name of being alive, but is dead." And since the sinner is spiritually a corpse, he is unable to produce works endowed with the merit of sanctifying grace. Even such deeds as are praiseworthy in themselves are valueless unto life everlasting when done whilst one is in rebellion against God.

Finally, it is in sin or the aversion of one's freewill from God that the cause of eternal damnation is to be found. He who deliberately turns away from God by committing a

grievous sin and dies in this attitude towards his Creator, is lost, and this because of his own perverse will and choice. In the day of judgment the wicked "shall go into everlasting punishment" (St. Matt., 25, 46).

"To providence it belongs to permit certain defects in those things which are subject to providence. Thus, as men are ordained to eternal life through the providence of God, it likewise is part of that providence to suffer some to fall away from that end; this is called reprobation. Thus, as predestination is a part of providence in regard to those ordained to eternal salvation, so reprobation is a part of providence in regard to those who turn aside from that end. Hence reprobation implies not only foreknowledge, but also something more, as does providence. Therefore, as predestination includes the will to confer grace and glory; so also reprobation includes the will to suffer a person to fall into sin, and to impose the punishment of damnation on account of that sin. God, indeed, loves all men and all creatures, inasmuch as He wishes them all some good; but He does not wish every good to them all. So far, therefore, as He does not wish this particular good—namely, eternal

life—He is said to hate or reprobate them.

"Reprobation, however, differs in its causality from predestination. This latter is the cause both of what is expected in the future life by the predestined,—namely, glory—and of what is received in this life,—namely, grace. Reprobation is not the cause of what is in the present—namely, sin; but it is the cause of abandonment of God. It is the cause, however, of what is assigned in the future,—namely, eternal punishment. But guilt proceeds from the free-will of the person who is reprobated and deserted by grace. In this way the word of the prophet is true,—namely, 'destruction is thy own, O Israel.'

"Reprobation by God does not take away anything from the power of the person reprobated. Hence, when it is said that the reprobated cannot obtain grace, this must not be understood as implying absolute impossibility, but only conditional impossibility, *viz.*, that the predestined must necessarily be saved; yet by a conditional necessity, which does not do away with the liberty of choice. Hence, although anyone reprobated by God cannot acquire grace, nevertheless that he falls into this

or that particular sin comes from the abuse of his freewill. Hence it is rightly imputed to him as guilt." [7]

Since every sin is a deliberate, personal act that makes one guilty in God's sight, it is to be carefully avoided at all times as the greatest of evils. Should anyone sin and incur the dreadful punishment of eternal damnation, he will have only himself to blame for it. The damned, as well as the blessed, are destined to glorify God forever; the former His justice, the latter His mercy. Even the reprobate sinners will be obliged to admit that God is merciful towards them, inasmuch as He has punished them less than they deserved.

Now, is it possible for one who is on the way to perdition to get back to the way leading Godward? Can a man who has deliberately separated himself from God, again become reunited to Him? Is it possible to remove the guilt of sin from the soul? It must be plain to everyone that sin is always an evil in itself as well as in its consequences to the person who commits it. Every sin is necessarily displeasing to God, and must, therefore, be removed from the soul. For the sinner there is

[7] *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 23, a. 3.

no way Godward, other than to abandon the path of wickedness. He who commits a grievous sin destroys the bond of union between himself and God. He thus leaves the kingdom of God and deliberately goes over to the kingdom of Satan. By sinning he becomes spiritually enslaved, and consequently unhappy. He has set up an obstacle between himself and Heaven; in order to reunite himself to God and regain his right to Heaven, he must get rid of this obstacle. By committing sin he has left God; he must now abandon sin in order to return to God. Hence, his outraged conscience will eventually either bring the sinner, like Magdalen, to the feet of Christ, or else, like Judas, plunge him into the abyss of despair.

Thanks to the long-suffering God, so long as there is life there is hope! In this world even the greatest sinner can and must have hope. By neglecting to hope for pardon, the guilty adds sin to sin. In truth, no one can pray the Our Father sincerely, or make an act of faith as expressed in the Eleventh Article of the Creed, without hoping for the forgiveness of his sins.

Now, as one leaves God by means of one's

earthly affections, so must one return to God by means of these affections. In committing sin man fixes his heart upon a creature, instead of upon the Creator. A change of heart and attitude is required, so that the sinner may now hate that which he has loved, and love that which he has hated. A well-defined sorrow for past sin is absolutely essential. He who entertains true sorrow or contrition for sin, may be certain that God will forgive him. "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 50, 19).

The contrition required, however, must be sincere and universal. The penitent must detest his sins from the heart as the greatest evil, for, "it is an evil and a bitter thing to have left the Lord." True contrition looks backward and forward. In the retrospect, it is grief or sorrow over sin committed; and when considering the future, it is a resolve to sin no more. The true penitent is ready to suffer anything rather than sin again. Moreover, as far as he is able, the penitent sinner is resolved to repair his wrong-doing, to make restitution of ill-gotten goods, and to seek reconciliation with those whom he has unjustly offended.

When sorrow for sin comes from the heart, it embraces all one's sins. Genuine contrition does not confine itself to certain kinds of sin. A so-called sorrow, that would include the intention of repeating a specific offense when the occasion presented itself, would be of no avail.

Above all, sorrow for sin must proceed from a supernatural motive. A mere natural reason for grieving over sin would not suffice. Without the grace of God we can do absolutely nothing that will be available to salvation. Least of all can we obtain pardon for sin without God's grace. "Without Me," says Jesus Christ, "you can do nothing." If, for example, a drunkard were sorry for his transgressions because they have brought on disgrace and the contempt of his fellowmen, the motive for his sorrow would be merely natural, and without any efficacy in obtaining pardon from God. A thief, too, might be intensely sorry for having been caught in the act of thieving and for his arrest and imprisonment, without even thinking of his deed as an offence against the Seventh Commandment. His sorrow would be a purely natural sorrow, and hence it could not obtain pardon for him.

He must grieve over the theft because he has transgressed a commandment of his Lord.

Such supernatural sorrow or contrition may be so perfect and intense that it blots out sin and renders the soul just and holy. Even before the sinner has received the Sacraments, he can, with God's grace, be freed from his sins by an act of perfect contrition, which is paramount to an act of perfect love of God, and implies a readiness to do all that is necessary to save one's soul. Everyone possesses this key to Heaven, and can use it at will. The penitent thief undoubtedly was saved in this manner; hardly had he made an act of perfect contrition when he heard the consoling promise: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise!"

The ordinary means of obtaining pardon is sacramental confession. The justice and holiness secured in the first of the sacraments is, alas, often lost. In committing grievous sin the right to Heaven obtained in Baptism is forfeited, and the union with God is destroyed. There is a second Sacrament, which has for its primary purpose the reconciliation of the sinner with God. In the language of St. John Chrysostom, the Sacrament of Penance is the

"plank of salvation thrown out to the soul that has been shipwrecked by sin"; and indeed, it is obligatory on all who have committed sin after Baptism and wish to be saved, to use this "plank of salvation." No man who refuses to confess his sins to a rightly ordained minister of God can hope to attain the harbor of eternal bliss. For the Sacrament of Penance, according to the Catechism, is a Sacrament in which the repentant sinner receives from the priest, who holds the place of God, forgiveness of his sins. And this forgiveness of sins has been made dependent on confession: no priest can forgive the sins of a man who is unwilling to confess them; for, auricular confession, or the open avowal of one's sins in the ear of a priest, is of divine institution.

In the Gospel of St. John (20, 22, sq.) we read that Our Lord appeared to the Apostles after His Resurrection and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." And on another occasion Jesus said to His disciples: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever you shall

loose on earth, shall be loosed in Heaven." Now, from these words of the Son of God we know for certain that the Apostles received a power to loose man from the fetters of his transgressions.

This power, too, according to the intention of the giver—Jesus Christ, Our Lord—was to be exercised in a judicial manner, for it is a power to retain and to forgive, to bind and to loose. Surely, the all-wise Author of this Sacrament did not intend the ministers thereof to retain or to forgive sins according to their subjective whims, their likes or dislikes, but according to the disposition of the penitent. Should a sinner approach them in a haughty and arrogant manner, they were to retain his sins, whilst, on the contrary, they were to forgive the sins of those who manifested a contrite and humble heart.

But how, I ask, were the Apostles and their successors to learn the disposition of penitents if these were not bound to reveal their innermost thoughts? The minister of the Sacrament of Penance could never form a correct judgment of the penitent's disposition, if the latter would not unfold his soul in auricular confession. The very nature and character of

this Sacrament suppose and require a willingness on the part of the penitent to confess his sins to a divinely constituted judge—to a legitimate successor of the Apostles.

I say to a legitimate successor of the Apostles; for the judicial power to forgive and to retain sins was not given exclusively to the twelve disciples of Our Lord. The Sacrament of Penance, as well as every one of the other six Sacraments, was given in the first place to the Church, to be preserved and administered by her so long as there were men to be saved; hence, the Apostles were to communicate their power to retain and to forgive sins to their successors in the sacred ministry. And it was in this manner that the power and right to administer the Sacrament of Penance have come down from the Apostles to every duly ordained bishop and priest. These alone are the divinely constituted dispensers of the Sacrament of Penance, for these alone are the legitimate successors of the Apostles.

The teaching of the Church, too, as coming from the Apostles, in regard to the matter and form of the Sacraments is to be accepted. Now, the divine origin of auricular confession has always been held by the Apostles and

their successors. During the first few centuries of the Christian era this truth was never called into question. The first heretics who abandoned the one true Church, erroneously restricted and limited the power to retain and to forgive sins, but they never ventured to deny that the Sacrament of Penance must be administered under the form of auricular confession. Even to this day the followers of Nestorius, who fell away in the fourth century, advocate the necessity of auricular confession.

Even though there were no traditions to prove the divine origin of auricular confession, our unaided reason would convince us that this institution had originated with the Author of human nature. The reasonableness of auricular confession, in the Catholic sense of the term, becomes quite apparent when we reflect on the tendency which all men have of communicating to others the thoughts that weigh heavily on their minds. Everyone longs to have a sincere friend, to whom he can confide his secret trials and afflictions.

When great internal anguish comes upon a man, he looks about him for some confidential friend, with whom he can talk the matter over. No one can secure relief from desola-

tion and kindred trials by keeping them locked up in his bosom. Yea, the greater the depression of spirit, the more will one long to communicate it to another and ask his advice. And so universal is this tendency of our nature that often it has moved criminals to seek relief from the remorse that harassed them by publicly confessing their misdeeds. Even murderers have been known to give themselves up of their own accord to the officers of the law, although they were morally certain that by doing so they would incur capital punishment, or many years' imprisonment. To impart one's innermost thoughts and sentiments to another, especially if they be of a depressing nature, is, then, an innate tendency of all men; and by instituting auricular confession, Jesus Christ, the Divine Author of human nature, wished to supply us with the means of satisfying this tendency. Well may we, then, thank our dear Lord for this source of relief from the greatest of trials—guilt of sin. Ah, how many a sinner has found in a contrite confession that hope and peace which he had sought for in vain elsewhere!

On the other hand it cannot be denied that one of the reasons why non-Catholics are com-

monly so ill at ease in religious matters is the fact that they lack this means of unburdening their souls. Professor von Mayr, of Freiburg, after a diligent study of this subject, concludes with the Protestant statistician Alexander von Oettingen, that "the greater number of suicides among Protestants is owing to the very essence of their religion,—a religion that does not and cannot offer to the despairing sinner the hope and easement provided by the Son of God in sacramental confession."

The sanctity of the fourth Sacrament—the Holy Eucharist—presupposes and requires the Sacrament of Penance; for who could be so presumptuous as to imagine himself free from sin! We all are sinners! St. James says that "we all offend God in many things." And our Divine Lord inculcates the same truth when He exhorts all to pray "forgive us our [daily] trespasses." On the other hand, in the Sacrament of the Altar we receive Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Through this Sacrament we become most intimately united with Holiness itself. The path Godward brings us again and again to the Holy Table to partake of the Divine Bread which came down from Heaven. Here we have the best means of preserving

and strengthening our union with God. Now, would it not argue either great presumption or diabolical malice in the sinner to approach this Holy Sacrament and receive his Divine Lord unrepentant? How can anyone who is in the state of mortal sin and in enmity with our Lord dare to receive Him in Holy Communion? Such a man would commit a greater sin than did that brutal soldier who struck the Saviour a stinging blow in the face.

Even those who are progressing Godward have need, at least at times, of the Sacrament of Penance as a preparation for Holy Communion; for, all men can truthfully pray, "O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter my roof; say but the word, and my soul shall be healed." And what better preparation can be imagined for this intimate union with God, called Holy Communion, than the disposition required and developed by sacramental confession.

In the Tribunal of Penance man is taught humility. This holy Sacrament brings home to him, in a most effectual manner, his complete subjection to Almighty God. It teaches men their equality before their Lord and Creator, by whose power the priest forgives

sins. In this sacred tribunal there is absolutely no distinction of rank or station. Here Sovereign Pontiff, King, and peasant possess the same rank and belong to the same class. Surely there could be no more effectual preparation for Holy Communion than the one provided in sacramental confession; for in sinning man exalts himself in pride and disobeys his Creator; in confessing his sins to a priest, however, he humbles himself and obeys Almighty God in His representative. In order to make a salutary confession one must necessarily humble himself, and this humility is diametrically opposed to the spirit of pride implied in sin. The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, then, presupposes,—yea, at times requires,—the Sacrament of Penance as a preparation for the worthy reception of our Lord in Holy Communion.

Of course, not every avowal of sin made to a priest is a worthy and valid confession. It is possible to make a bad or sacrilegious confession. Besides having a genuine and supernatural sorrow, the penitent must give exterior evidence of it by telling his sins in a certain well-defined manner.

The confession must above all be clear. The

penitent is obliged to tell the kind and number of mortal sins he has committed since Baptism; or, if he has already received the Sacrament of Penance, he must tell the mortal sins he has committed since his last worthy confession. And if the penitent should deliberately conceal the species, or number, of the mortal sins of which he is guilty, his confession would not only be invalid, but sacrilegious also. Such an act would be a sin of the gravest nature,—a lie to the Holy Ghost,—drawing the curse of God down upon the perpetrator. We have a thrilling example of how God punishes this kind of offense in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, who were stricken dead for having committed it.

If the penitent has no grievous or mortal sin to confess, he is to tell the venial sins he has been guilty of since his previous confession; and it is well always to add one or the other more serious offense from one's former life. Venial sin is a transgression of God's law, just as mortal sin is, but in a matter or manner less grievous. Everyone, therefore, should make it a practice to confess the venial sins he may have committed since his last confession. Besides, it is often very difficult, and,

sometimes, impossible to say whether a sin is a mortal or a venial transgression of the law of God. Since those lesser offenses against God, termed venial sins, no matter how insignificant, are violations of the moral order and deserve temporal punishment, they ought to be carefully removed from the soul, and avoided in future. God, who is infinite goodness, deserves the very best service we can give Him. Every sin, even the smallest, is an act of disloyalty to Him; hence, everyone who has sinned, should be disposed to avow it, and, with a contrite and humble heart seek forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance.

Let no one be deceived by Satan into thinking that he has nothing to confess. St. Augustine says: "It is not easy for so great a change to take place in man that there should be nothing in him deserving blame; let all, then, be constant in going to confession, for there is no one who has nothing to confess." And at another place the same learned Doctor of the Church asserts that, although he held it "possible for man to be preserved from all sin, yet he does not believe there are such" here on earth. Perfect sinlessness is an extraordinary privilege, which was granted to the Blessed

Virgin Mary, and, in all probability, to her alone. The man, therefore, who imagines that he is without guilt, and consequently has nothing to confess, is mistaken. Anyone who examines his conscience diligently, will soon find that he has been guilty of at least small sins; and after he has confessed these lesser offenses, let him draw on the past and confess some of the graver sins committed in early life. A sin may be forgiven by Almighty God again and again, and the more sincere the confession, the greater will be the remission of the temporal punishment due to the penitent's sins after eternal punishment has been remitted.

Moreover, the greater one's sincerity in confession, the greater also will be one's clearness. Clearness is a most important quality in a penitent; for, how is it possible for the confessor to form a correct estimate of a sin if the penitent does not clearly state its kind and the circumstances which increase or decrease its malice and gravity; for example, if one has stolen something from the Church, this circumstance must be mentioned, for it renders the theft a sacrilege.

But non-Catholics say that it is degrading and unworthy for a man to confess his sins

to a fellow-mortal. In answer to this objection I would briefly say that Almighty God, our Supreme Lord and Creator, requires us to confess our sins; hence, to do so can neither be degrading nor unworthy of man. Besides, which of two children is the more honorable and deserving of pardon,—the one who confesses his fault to his parents, or the one who conceals it? Thus in our relations to our heavenly Father! The person who confesses his sins to God's representative is more pious and honorable than he who does not. Sin is degrading; but not the humble avowal of it as required by the One who has been offended.

The third quality that is required for a worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance is the readiness to make satisfaction for his sins. It is not enough to be sorry for having offended Almighty God and to confess one's sins to His representative—a duly authorized priest; the penitent must do more, he must make satisfaction for his sins, or at least have the will to do so. The moral order, violated by sin, must be restored. This is accomplished by undergoing punishment in one form or another.

There is an eternal and a temporal punish-

ment due to sin. Thus, for instance, God forgave Moses and David and withdrew the eternal punishment they had incurred by sinning, yet the temporal punishment remained, to be expiated in this world; for we read that the one was punished by Almighty God by being forbidden to cross the Jordan, and the other by being deprived of his son. Now, in the sacred Tribunal of Penance the eternal punishment due to sin is remitted, along with the guilt; the temporal punishment, however, is to be expiated in some other way, for example, by gaining indulgences, by enduring one's daily trials and hardships in patience and resignation to the will of God, by means of mortification and self-denial here in this world, or by suffering the flames of Purgatory hereafter. Perhaps the most efficacious means of freeing oneself from this temporal punishment due to sin is to fulfill the penance imposed by the confessor.

Sin, with its consequent evils, is a spiritual malady. The penance enjoined by the priest is a spiritual medicine, and the more readily the patient applies this remedy, the quicker will his soul be healed. The priest must impose some penitential prayer or work of satis-

faction; for he is a divinely appointed judge in the Tribunal of Penance, and as such he is obliged to require the penitent to undergo and expiate a portion at least of the temporal punishment due to his sins. Should a penitent obstinately refuse to perform the penance imposed, the confessor could not absolve him. If we consider the matter rightly, the penance given in confession is a real favor, for it enables the penitent easily to expiate in this world that which he would otherwise have to expiate in a severer form in Purgatory.

The Sacrament of Penance is rightly and specifically called the Sacrament of Mercy, for this Sacrament more than any other reflects God's infinite mercy and generosity. By its means there is offered an easy way of obtaining pardon for sins committed after Baptism. The very circumstances under which this Blessed Sacrament was instituted, seem to indicate it as the outpouring of a heart full of mercy and forgiveness. It was after His glorious Resurrection from the dead, at a time when Jesus was incapable of sadness and suffering, that He appeared to the Apostles and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and

whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Such were the words of the glorified Saviour, at a time when He knew naught but merciful forgiveness.

The Sacrament of Penance is intended by its Divine Author to be a source of great spiritual blessings, and the greatest of these is the remission of sins. No matter how many sins the penitent may have committed, or what authorized priest gives the absolution, the guilt and eternal punishment due to them are taken away completely at the moment the absolution is pronounced. Yea, if our Divine Lord sat in one confessional, and an ordinary priest in another, the absolution of Our Lord would not be more efficacious than the absolution of his delegate, the priest. For the power which the Son of God gave to the Apostles and their legitimate successors is a power to forgive and retain sins without reserve or restriction: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

The effect produced by the Sacrament of Penance is not merely a negative one; it is positive as well. This holy rite not only cleanses the soul, but, it also adorns and beau-

tifies it. The Sacrament of Penance imparts to the worthy recipient sanctifying grace, and, together with this precious good, the penitent obtains his lost merit for Heaven and interior peace. He who by sacramental absolution is thus freed from the guilt of sin, receives back the beautiful snow-white garment of sanctifying grace, which he lost by sinning. By this means the penitent, like the Prodigal Son, is reinstated in his former rights, and the ring of spiritual adoption is placed upon his finger. And if anyone goes to confession in the state of sanctifying grace, he receives an increase of that supernatural quality which makes us co-heirs with Christ of eternal happiness.

And just as a meadow, which has been parched and scorched by the sun, regains its former beauty and verdure under the influence of a fructifying rain, so the soul of the penitent, laid waste by the flames of inordinate passions, by means of Penance again becomes fruitful in good works and merit for Heaven. By committing mortal sin man loses all the merits for Heaven he may ever have acquired. "If the just man," says the Holy Ghost, "turns himself away from his justice and do iniquity . . . all his justices [*i. e.,* all his good works]

which he hath done, shall not be remembered." In the Tribunal of Penance, however, through the bounteous mercy of God all past merit is again restored. God himself assures us, through the Prophet Ezechiel, that "the wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness." And again, "none of his sins, which he hath committed, shall be imputed to him." All the penitent's sins, therefore, are wiped out by the Sacrament of Penance and his past merits restored at the moment he receives absolution.

A third effect of this Holy Sacrament is the imparting of true interior peace and joy. The Sacrament of Penance is particularly efficacious in eliciting compunction of heart, without which there can be no true sorrow for sin. And it is the tear of repentance that refreshes the soul of the sinner, as the drop of dew refreshes the flower. The immediate effect of a good confession is, commonly, peace of mind. The sharp stings of remorse, inflicted by sinful indulgence, are removed in this holy Sacrament and the balm of consolation is poured upon the wounds of the contrite penitent.

On the other hand, the soul that is stricken with a deep and sincere sorrow for sin, is like-

wise aglow with the fire of divine love. It was intense grief for her sins that filled the heart of Mary Magdalen with such an ardent love of our Lord. She seemed to live and labor for Him alone. Hence, the very thought of her Lord and Master was the source of a joy and peace hitherto unknown to that repentant child. This was the case also with St. Peter, St. Augustine, St. Margaret of Cortona, and countless others who cherished compunction and sorrow for past sins. They enjoyed great inward peace and joy because of the sincerity of their repentance.

It cannot be said, however, that the supernatural gift of peace and consolation is invariably given to all who worthily receive the Sacrament of Penance. No! One may make a good confession and still remain in a desolate state of mind, for consolation does not always follow upon the valid reception of the Sacrament of Penance; joy in the Lord is only accidentally, albeit commonly, imparted in Penance.

The causes of desolation are many and diverse. Often such a state of mind is due, not to a moral, but to a physical cause, such as ill-health, an abnormal state of the body, or run-

down nerves. When this is the case, a physician should be consulted rather than the confessor. Not infrequently, however, Almighty God withholds for a time the sweetness of His consolation even from devout souls, thus allowing them to experience their own helplessness for the good of their soul. To be harassed by a certain aridity of spirit in prayer and other devout exercises gives us an occasion of stengthening our faith and hope in God. Surely a greater faith and a stronger hope is required to serve God perseveringly in desolation than in consolation.

It may happen, too, that aridity of spirit is due to poor advice and direction on the part of one's confessor or spiritual director; and this, again, to the lack of a true understanding of a penitent's spiritual condition. It is very difficult at times for the confessor to secure a clear knowledge of his penitent's soul; and yet it is impossible for him to guide and advise his penitent efficaciously unless he possesses this knowledge. The duty, on the part of the confessor, to secure an accurate avowal in the confessional, implies a corresponding duty on the part of the penitent to be clear, frank, and sincere. The penitent has the duty—in the

words of the Psalmist, "to pour out his soul like water." It should be his earnest endeavor to reveal his spiritual condition to his confessor as it is known to God. Only then can he expect to be cured of the malady that has brought him to the confessional. Even when the penitent is quite open and sincere, it is often very difficult for the confessor to diagnose his spiritual condition; for often enough the penitent cannot explain his case clearly for want of self-knowledge. The folds of the human heart are intricate, and the soul is well-nigh unfathomable.

St. Teresa was certainly clear and frank in the confessional, and still she tells us that for twenty years of her life she was not understood by her confessors. Having during all this time prayed daily to obtain a good spiritual guide, she finally found one who fully understood her. Perhaps her present beatitude in Heaven is to be ascribed to this divine favor.

To secure a good guide on the rugged and at times obscure path leading Godward should form the object of our daily prayers. Sinfulness, and consequent desolation, despondency, and like spiritual maladies are of

the soul, just as physical diseases are maladies of the body. Now, if it is important for an invalid to secure a physician who can restore his bodily health, it is surely of no less importance for us all to have a good physician to take care of our soul. If a medical doctor makes a mistake in the treatment of a case, this will at the worst have but temporal results, whereas a mistake on the part of a physician of souls may have eternal consequences. Hence it is of the greatest moment that one should frequently pray for the grace of a good and divinely enlightened confessor or spiritual guide.

Let all, then, who approach the holy Sacrament of Penance, do so with a submissive spirit. "A contrite and humbled heart the Lord will not despise." Such a disposition will prompt one to reveal himself to his confessor as he is revealed to the all-seeing eye of his Heavenly Father, who has appointed the confessor His representative in the Tribunal of Mercy. Thus will the penitent who has separated himself from God by sin, become reunited to the Supreme Good and enabled again to follow the path leading Godward. He Himself has promised to forgive the peni-

tent sinner all his iniquities. "The wickedness of the wicked" He assures us, "shall not hurt him in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness" and make a good confession.

"The little puddles in the street,
That now so lowly lie,
Once went with silver sandaled feet
Sublimely through the sky.

Nor shall they with the earth remain
For any length of days;
A pause—and they shall mount again
To sun's white silver rays."

CHAPTER VI

COMMUNION WITH GOD

COMMUNION with God is effected by conforming our will to the holy will of God. Such conformity, however, can be neither secured nor fostered without prayer. Prayer or the suppliant elevation of the mind and heart to God is a necessary means of salvation. To pray is man's most important duty. The Angel of the Schools has this to say about the utility and necessity of supplicating God for help: "Some hold that human affairs are not ruled by Divine Providence, whence it would follow that it is useless to pray and to worship God at all; of these it is written (Malach. 3, 14): 'You have said, He laboreth in vain that serveth God.' Another opinion held that all things, even in human affairs, happen of necessity; . . . and this opinion also excluded the utility of prayer. There was a third opinion of those who held that human affairs are indeed ruled by Divine Providence, and that they do not happen of necessity; yet they

deemed the disposition of Divine Providence to be changeable, and that it is changed by prayers and other things pertaining to the worship of God.

"In order to throw light on this question we must consider that Divine Providence disposes, not only what effects shall take place, but also from what causes and in what order these effects shall proceed. Now among other causes human acts are the cause of certain effects. Wherefore it must be that men do certain actions, not that they may change the divine disposition thereby, but that by these actions they may achieve certain effects according to the order of the divine disposition; for we pray, not that we may change the divine disposition, but that we may impetrate that which God has disposed to be fulfilled by our prayers; in other words, that, by asking, we may deserve to receive what Almighty God has disposed to give from eternity. We need to pray to God, not in order to make known to Him our needs or desires, but that we ourselves may be reminded of the necessity of having recourse to God's help in these matters." [1]

[1] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. II, 2, qu. 83, a. 2.

We must, therefore, pray in order to dispose ourselves properly for divine gifts and favors. That God has bestowed life and the countless benefits it implies long before we were able to ask Him for them, is no reason why we should not now offer Him belated prayers of thanksgiving. Then, too, if one truly appreciates the many favors he daily receives from God, he will beg for a continuance of them. And who does not realize that the supernatural gifts of God have been made dependent on humble prayer in a still fuller sense? "If you seek Me, you shall find Me." "Ask and you shall receive." No one can be saved without the supernatural aid of divine grace. Now, God offers all men the grace to pray: but further grace will be withheld from him who neglects to pray for it humbly.

Though a person were told by an angelic messenger that he belonged to the predestined, he would still be obliged to supplicate God's help; for without prayer he could not obtain the grace necessary to "make sure his calling and election." Holy Writ gives an illustrious example of the necessity and efficacy of intercessory prayer in securing the salvation of a soul that was predestined. "It is said that Isaac

besought the Lord for his wife because she was barren; and God heard the prayer, and made Rebecca to conceive. But from that conception Jacob was born, and he was predestined. Now, his predestination would not have happened if he had not been born; therefore, predestination can be furthered by the prayers of the saints.

"In predestination two things are to be considered, namely, the divine preordination and its effect. As regards the former, in no possible way can predestination be furthered by the prayers of the saints, for it is not due to their prayers that anyone is predestined by God. As regards the latter, predestination is said to be helped by the prayers of the saints, and by other good works, because Providence, of which predestination is a part, does not do away with secondary causes but so provides effects that the order of secondary causes falls also under Providence. Just as natural effects are provided by God in such a way that natural causes are directed to bring about these natural effects, without which these effects would not happen; so the salvation of a person is predestined by God in such a way, that whatever helps that person towards salvation

falls under the order of predestination, whether it be one's own prayers or those of another; or good works, without which one would not attain to salvation. Hence, the predestined must strive after good works and prayer; because through these means predestination is most certainly fulfilled. For this reason it is said: 'Labor the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. (2 St. Peter 1, 10).'"[2]

God does not need our prayers in order to procure His glory, which is the final end of all creatures. But we stand in absolute need of His assistance in order to work out our salvation. Nor does God oblige us to pray because He needs our help, but because He wishes to enable us to work out our salvation by cooperating freely with Him. "One is said to be helped by another in two ways: in one way, inasmuch as he receives power from him: and to be helped thus belongs to the weak; but this cannot be said of God, and thus we are to understand, 'who hath helped the Spirit of the Lord?' In another way one is said to be helped by a person through whom he carries out his work, as a master through a servant. In this

[2] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 23, a. 8.

way God is helped by us, inasmuch as we execute His orders, according to 1 Cor. 3, 9: "We are God's coadjutors." Nor is this on account of any defect in the power of God, but because He employs intermediary causes in order that the beauty of order may be preserved in the universe; and also that He may communicate to creatures the dignity of causality." [3] In fact the dignity of man seems greatest whilst he is engaged in prayer; for it is then that he is holding converse with the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

By maintaining the spirit of prayer we dispose ourselves best for all that we need. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all things else shall be added unto you." True, "God bestows many things on us out of His liberality, without our asking for them: but that He wishes to bestow certain things on us at our asking, is for the sake of our good, . . . that we may recognize in Him the Author of our goods." [4]

But should we perhaps do as well by applying for the aid we need elsewhere, and independently of the Almighty? Or can assistance

[3] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 23, a. 8.
[4] *Summa Theologica,* P. II, qu. 83, a. 3.

be obtained in particular instances from our fellowmen regardless of Divine Providence? Is God perhaps unable to hear certain petitions? Or does He understand all the peculiar circumstances which we would wish a prospective benefactor to know about ourselves, or about those who expect us to remember them in our prayers? Does God at all times fully appreciate our every need and desire? There can be no doubt about it; the supreme, eternal and sovereign Lord possesses all perfections in an eminent degree; consequently He knows all about each and every one of us.

"Man has different kinds of knowledge, according to the different objects that he knows. He has intelligence as regards the knowledge of principles; he has science as regards the knowledge of conclusions; he has wisdom, according as he knows the highest Cause; he has counsel or prudence, according as he knows what is to be done. But, God knows all these by one simple act of knowledge. Hence the simple knowledge of God can be called by all these names; in such a way, however, that there must be removed from each of them, so far as they enter into the divine predication, everything that savors of imperfection; and

everything that expresses perfection is to be retained in them." [5]

Father Lessius, S.J., in his excellent book, *The Names of God,* explains the pure act by which the mind of God comprehends all things thus: "The Infinite Wisdom first turns towards the Essence of God, and understands it perfectly; for it is equal to and commensurate with it. From that adequate comprehension of the Divine Essence proceeds immediately the conception or the representation of all possible things; following that conception is the distinct knowledge of whatever all actual and possible creatures can do; then comes the clear intuition of everything that can be done in all possible suppositions, and finally there is the eternal vision of all things, past, present, and future." [6]

To God the past, present, and future are known with the greatest clearness and certitude. And not only is everything that has actually occurred known to Him, but also that which, under other circumstances, might have happened. God, therefore, cannot be taken by surprise. All things actual and possible have

[5] *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 14, a. 1.

[6] Lessius, S.J., tr. Campbell, S.J., *The Names of God,* p. 166.

been known to Him from eternity. "He that planted the ear shall He not hear? He that made the eye shall He not see?" (Ps. 93, 9.) "The Spirit [of God] searcheth all things" (1 Cor. 2, 10). Since God's mind compasses all things knowable, He knows not only our needs, but also, that which would afford us the best and most efficacious relief or benefit.

It is a great mistake to conceive God as being far removed from us, or difficult of approach. God is quite near to each one of us. God is nearer to us than we are to each other. In Him "we live, and move, and have our being." As we contemplate the coming forth of the universe from the void of nothingness at the Creator's bidding, we find that every creature in the universe has its substance solely from, by, and in God. And it is to the Almighty Creator that all things owe their present existence as well as their origin. There is absolutely nothing in creation that is or ever will be independent of God in its origin, essence, and preservation. Nor can anything ever get beyond the pale of God's almighty power and omnipresence. "Since God is infinitely perfect, He must needs be present entirely in the whole and entirely in each part of

universal space. . . . So incomprehensibly perfect is this divine attribute that God is able to be entire everywhere, and to be contained in no place. He is able to come without moving from the place where He was, and to go without leaving the spot whence He came." In regard to His omnipresence, "God may be conceived as a fictitious sphere, the centre of which is everywhere and the circumference nowhere."

Since God is all-perfect, He must necessarily be all-powerful. Were He circumscribed within certain limits, the perfect exercise of His almighty power would likewise be circumscribed: this, however, would involve a contradiction since His power would then not be unlimited. God is in the most remote place as well as in the nearest. There are stars whose light, although traveling towards us from the dawn of creation at the rate of one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second, has not as yet had time to reach the earth. Still, God is present to those far distant spheres as well as He is to the ones nearest us. Just as, *e.g.,* twice three are six in all places, so is God everywhere. We cannot imagine a single real or possible place in the visible or invisible uni-

verse where the Almighty is not persent by His essence, power, and knowledge. "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend unto Heaven, Thou art there: if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning to dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy Hand lead me; and Thy right Hand shall hold me" (Ps. 138, 7–9). "Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool," saith the Lord. We are, therefore, always and ever under the very eyes of God and can address our prayers to Him without moving from the place we occupy.

"Although God is everywhere, He is neither the soul of the universe, nor is the universe any part of God. Our limitations compel us to speak of God as we speak of men; but, as intelligent believers, we realize fully that God has no bodily form, and that He is decidedly not a merely magnified man. The term 'Personal God' means that God, the Creator, is Himself, and not His creation—the universe. It means that God is essentially and eternally independent of the universe, even though the universe is dependent upon Him both for its existence and preservation. By

substituting muddled imagining for clear thinking, some people identify God with the universe (pantheism), but that makes prayer absurd and sin impossible. If, as part of the universe, I am a part of God, prayer would be self-worship, and what we call sin would be the act of God for which I could have no responsibility whatever. Both morality and religion imply necessarily belief in a Personal God." [7]

God, however, is not everywhere in the same manner. He "is in all things by His power, inasmuch as all things are subject to His power; He is by His knowledge in all things, as all things are bare and open to His eyes; He is in all things by His essence, inasmuch as He is present to all as the cause of their being." How God is in "things created by Him, may be considered from human affairs. A king, for example, is said to be in the whole kingdom by his power, although he is not everywhere present. . . . Again a person is said to be by his presence in other things that are subject to his inspection; as things in a house are said to be present to anyone, who nevertheless may not be in substance in every

[7] H. C. Hengel, Ph. D.

part of the house. Lastly a thing is said to be by way of substance or essence in that place in which its substance may be." [8] Since God is everywhere by His knowledge, power, and essence, everything is subject to Him in the most perfect possible manner.

It is in the light of the all-pervading presence of God that we are able to understand things. "The light of natural reason itself is a participation of the divine light; as likewise we are said to see and judge of sensible things in the sun, that is, by the sun's light. Hence Augustine says: The lessons of instruction can be seen only as it were by their own sun, namely, God." [9]

Surely then, we ought to have unbounded confidence in the all-powerful and omnipresent God. No one could be so well acquainted with all our needs, or so well able or willing to help us. God can help us even in the most desperate circumstances, for He possesses unlimited power. The attribute of power flows from His very nature, which is infinite.

"Active power exists in God according to the measure in which He is actual. Now His

[8] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 8, a. 3.
[9] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 12, a. 11.

existence is infinite, inasmuch as it is not limited by anything that receives it. Therefore, it is necessary that the active power in God should be definite. For in every agent is it found that the more perfectly an agent has the form by which it acts, the greater is its power to act. For instance, the hotter a thing is, the greater power has it to give heat; and it would have infinite power to give heat, were its own heat infinite. Hence, since the Divine Essence, through which God acts, is infinite, it follows that His power likewise is infinite." [10]

We can, if we will, see evidences of God's almighty power on all sides. The vast universe is preserved and governed by the sole power of the Creator. In order to remind mankind that He is the Lord of Heaven and earth, the Almighty at times manifests His power in an unusual manner. Thus He protects Daniel against rapacious lions, the three youths in the fiery furnace, David against Goliath; He also rolls back the waters of the Red Sea and makes a path for the Israelites; thereafter, He makes the waters recede again, and swallow up the pursuing Egyptians.

How strikingly, too, is the omnipotence of

[10] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 25, a. 2.

God manifested in the miraculous works of Jesus Christ. The angels—bad and good—acknowledge Him as their Master and obey His word. Inanimate as well as animate nature, things past, present, and future, are subject to His will. Even the dead come back to life in obedience to Him, the Divine Author of life and death. "Natural science teaches correctly that the phenomena in the air, in the sea, and in the earth (storms, earthquakes, lightnings, deadly pestilence) spring from variations in the relations and powers of the elements; but from whom come those natural relations and powers as well as the conditions producing such variations? Who is their first great cause?—Can any event take place in the created world without the knowledge of the Omnipotent Creator, against His Will, or without His permission? To assert the possibility of such an event, would be to blaspheme against the omnipotence of God. It is in this, as the master spirit of his age, Count de Maistre, has ingeniously remarked that the disease of our time consists. . . . Unbelievers would endure more easily the fear of God than confidence in His power and love. Hence they would sophisticate away all belief in the

immediate influence of God upon the world, and would emancipate nature from all subjection to His law. They would erect this dark godless nature into a deity, before which, falling down, they would adore; and while they thus limited the power of the Almighty, they would in their own imaginations at least, be making man more noble, more free and independent. But these impious and fantastic theories fall before simple human reason. In more powerful contradiction to their doctrines, the might of God reveals itself, and declares that it alone is omnipotent by its dominion over the elements, where man can exercise no control. Thus did our Redeemer, before the eyes of all, display His more than human—His divine power,—when He spoke to the raging sea, 'Be ye calm,' and in an instant the furious waves lay in peace beneath His feet.' "

Nothing whatever can happen without God's will, wish, or tolerance. Nor could anyone prevent God's actual will from being obeyed. Still, whatever has happened, could have been prevented by the Almighty; and with regard to the future, there is no distinction between God willing that a thing be done and its being accomplished.

"In man, in whom power and essence are distinct from will and intellect, and again, intellect from wisdom, and will from justice, there can be something in the power which is neither in the just will, nor in the wise intellect. But in God, power and essence, will and intellect, wisdom and justice, are one and the same. Hence, there can be nothing in the divine power which cannot also be in His just will or in His wise intellect. Nevertheless, because God's will cannot be determined from necessity to this or that order of things, except upon supposition, neither are His wisdom and justice restricted to this present order; so nothing prevents there being something in the divine power which He does not will, and which is not included in the order which He has placed in things. Again, because power is considered as executing, the will as commanding, and the intellect and wisdom as directing, what is attributed to His power considered in itself, God is said to be able to do in accordance with His absolute power. Of such a kind is everything which has the nature of being. What is, however, attributed to the divine power, according as it carries into execution the command of a just will,

God is said to be able to do by His ordinary power. In this manner, we must say that God can do other things by his absolute power than those He has foreknown and preordained He would do. But it could not happen that He should do anything which He had not foreknown, and had not preordained that He would do, because His actual doing is subject to His foreknowledge and preordination, though His power, which is His nature, is not so. For God does things because He wills so to do; yet the power to do them does not come from His will, but from His nature." [11]

That which is unthinkable is, of course, impossible. To say that God cannot make a square circle, and hence, is not all-powerful, is a fallacy, since the very term "square circle" involves a contradiction. Or, to say that God cannot lie, and therefore cannot do whatsoever He wills, is also erroneous; for, God is infinitely perfect, and for this reason cannot do that which would be contrary to truthfulness, which is a perfection. To be able to lie is an imperfection, a sin; and "to sin is to fall short of a perfect action; hence to be able to lie is to

[11] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 25, a. 5.

be able to fall short of a perfect action, which is repugnant to omnipotence." [12]

"Who shall declare the powers of the Lord? Who shall set forth all His praises?" (Ps. 105, 2), cries out the inspired David when contemplating the omnipotence of God. The minutest particle of dust, no less than the universe itself, implies the existence of an almighty Creator. Who could contemplate the vastness of creation without admiring the power required to make and preserve it! It would take a cannon-ball discharged from the earth twenty-five years to reach the sun, about eight hundred years to reach the planet Neptune, and well-nigh an incalculable period of time to arrive at the confines of the material universe. And still, at the Creator's will, this immense universe leaped from nothingness into being. And it would be as easy for the Almighty to create a million additional worlds as it was for Him to make the one in which we find ourselves.

A million torches lighted by Thy hand
Wander unwearied through the blue abyss;
They own Thy power, accomplish Thy command,
All gay with life, all eloquent with bliss.

[12] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 25, a. 3.

What shall we call them? Piles of crystal light—
A glorious company of golden streams—
Lamps of celestial ether burning bright—
Suns lighting systems with their joyous beams?
But Thou to these art as the [sun] to night.
Derzhavin-Bowring.

Nothing is impossible with God. "Whatsoever the Lord pleased He hath done, in Heaven, on earth, in the sea, in all the deeps." (Ps. 134, 6.) The creation of the material universe cost God no effort whatsoever: "He spoke and the heavens were created: He commanded and they were made." (Ps. 148, 5.) "I am the Almighty." (Gen. 1.) Nowhere else, perhaps, in all literature, do we find a more eloquent eulogy on God's omnipotence than that given us by the inspired author of the Book of Job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me if thou hast understanding who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? Upon what are its bases grounded? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars praised me together, and all the sons of God made a joyful melody? Who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth as issuing out

of the womb; when I made a cloud the garment thereof, and wrapped it in a mist as in swaddling bands? I set my bounds around it, and made it bars and doors; and I said, hitherto thou shalt come, and shalt go no farther, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves." (Job. 38.) Ah, how grateful we should be that we have so powerful a God as our protector! God alone can help, console, and sanctify us when and as He wills, for He alone knows us perfectly; He alone is everywhere; He alone is all-powerful, all-good, and eternal. No one save God is able to be a perfect and abiding friend to us. Nor could anyone be more willing to help us.

In order, however, that our cry for help be fruitful and efficacious, it must above all be inspired by loving confidence. We must firmly believe that God is not only able, but also willing to grant our prayers. "Prayer depends chiefly on faith, not for its efficacy in meriting, because thus it depends chiefly on charity, but for its efficacy in impetrating, because it is through faith that man comes to know God's omnipotence and mercy, which are the source whence prayer impetrates what it asks for." [13]

[13] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. II, 2, qu. 83, a. 15.

In countless ways the all-powerful God tells us to rely on Him. He wishes, yea, requires us to have recourse to Him in our temporal and spiritual needs. The all-powerful God is more ready to grant our prayers than we are to offer them. Surely the countless favors received from God in the past ought to inspire us with confidence! How often has God hunted us up, so to say, in order to exercise His power, mercy, and goodness in our behalf. It is due to these divine attributes that we were created, and again that we are now among God's beneficiaries on earth. His boundless power was shown us in a special way whenever we offended Him. For "in this is it made manifest that God has supreme power, that He freely forgives sins. It is not for one who is bound by laws of a superior to forgive sins of his own free will. By sparing and having mercy on men, God conducts them to the participation of an infinite good, which is the ultimate effect of the divine power. The effect of the divine mercy is, in fact, the foundation of all the divine works. For nothing is due to anyone, except on account of something already given him gratuitously by God. In this way the divine omnipotence is particularly

made manifest, because to it pertains the first foundation of all good things." [14]

Let us, then, in our prayers, have unbounded confidence in the almighty power and tender mercy of God—our best and dearest Friend. It is a mistake to shorten prescribed prayers because they seem to be fruitless, or do not dispel present sorrow. Though one say his prayers with devotion and confidence, he may, at times, still remain depressed by aridity and desolation. True, "the direct and principal effect of devotion is spiritual joy; but sorrow is its secondary and indirect effect. For devotion is caused by a twofold consideration: chiefly by the consideration of God's goodness, because this consideration belongs to the term, as it were, of the movement of the will in surrendering itself to God, and the direct result of this consideration is joy, according to Ps. 76, 4: 'I remembered God and was delighted'; but accidentally this consideration causes a certain sorrow in those who do not yet enjoy God fully, according to Ps. 41, 3: 'My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God,' and afterwards it goes on (verse 4): 'My tears

[14] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. I, qu. 25, a. 3.

have been my bread,' etc.; secondarily, devotion is caused by the consideration of one's own failings; for this consideration pertains to the term from which man withdraws by the movement of his devout will, namely, that he should not be self-confident, but subject himself to God. This consideration has an opposite tendency to the first: for it is of a nature to cause sorrow directly (when one thinks over his failings), and joy accidentally, namely, through hope of the divine assistance. It is accordingly evident that the first and direct effect of devotion is joy, while the secondary and accidental effect is that sorrow which is according to God." [15] Let no one, therefore, imagine that his prayers are useless because he is not at once freed from sorrow or tribulation. Surely the prayer of Our Lord in the Garden of Olives was no less effective because of His "being sad and sorrowful unto death."

"There is a sorrow which is praiseworthy and meritorious, *viz.,* the kind that flows from holy love, as, for instance, when a man is saddened over his or another's sins. Furthermore, it is employed as a useful means of satisfying

[15] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 82, a. 4.

for sins, according to the saying of the Apostle (2 Cor. 7, 10): 'The sorrow that is according to God worketh penance, steadfast unto salvation.' And so to atone for the sins of all men, Christ accepted sadness, the greatest in absolute quantity; yet not exceeding the rule of reason. . . ." [16] "Christ grieved not only over the loss of His own bodily life, but also over the sins of others. And this grief of Christ surpassed all grief of every contrite heart, both because it flowed from a greater wisdom and charity, by which the pang of contrition is intensified, and because He grieved at the one time for all sins (according to Is. 53, 4): 'He hath carried our sorrows.' But such was the dignity of Christ's life in the body, especially on account of the Godhead united with it, that its loss even for one hour would be a matter of greater grief than the loss of another man's life for howsoever long a time. Hence the Philosopher says that the man of virtue loves his life all the more in proportion as he knows it to be better; and yet he exposes it for virtue's sake. And in like fashion Christ laid down His most beloved life for the good of charity, according to (Jer. 12, 7): 'I have

[16] *Summa Theologica*, P. III, qu. 46, a. 6.

given My dear soul into the hands of her enemies.' " [17]

Perhaps the most common cause of spiritual aridity is a lack of effort to avoid distractions. It is true, prayer is a gift of God. But to dispose oneself for this gift, mortification is required. To pray well it is necessary above all that we control our imagination. God will not withhold the gift of prayer from such as earnestly strive to know and do His holy will. When one's affections are divided, one's interest also will be divided. If one is absorbed in things temporal he will, of course, find it difficult to meditate on things spiritual and eternal. There is no object of knowledge and love farther removed from the material order and sense-perception than God. He, therefore, who turns to the worship of God must dispose himself to adore Him "in spirit," that is, he must become a spiritual man.

Then, too, we are to devote a reasonable time every day to prayer. Let no one imagine that he has not the time to pray. Not even those whose vocational duties consist in practising the spiritual or corporal works of mercy are dispensed from prayer. To maintain that one

[17] *Summa Theologica,* P. III, qu. 46, a. 6.

has no time to pray is paramount to saying that one has no time to save his soul. Our routine work, of whatever kind, in order to be good and meritorious, must proceed from a prayerful spirit.

One can even perform otherwise good works in a sinful manner. No work of any kind whatsoever is acceptable to God that does not proceed from the humble and religious disposition implied in a prayerful spirit. The man, for instance, who is unwilling to give up sin and its occasion, cannot offer an efficacious prayer. "We know," says St. John (9, 31), "that God doth not hear sinners." The prayers of him who is in sin without being contrite, are of no avail. "He that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination" (Prov. 28, 9). The sinner must be sorry for having offended God; so long as he remains impenitent, he cannot expect any divine favors. "A contrite heart," however, "the Lord will not despise!" "No sinner has ever asked with sorrow the benefits of God without obtaining what he wanted" (St. Chrysostom).

We are to pray not only every day, but "al-

ways, and not faint." Now, the duty "to pray always" cannot be fulfilled unless one is free from grievous sin and in the state of God's grace. "The cause of prayer is the desire of charity, from which prayer ought to arise; and this desire ought to be in us always, either actually or virtually, for the virtue of this desire remains in whatever we do out of charity; and we ought to do all things 'to the glory of God' (1 Cor. 10, 31). From this point of view prayer ought to be continual, because we have to be busy about other works, and, as Augustine says, 'We pray to God with our lips at certain intervals and seasons in order to admonish ourselves of suchlike signs to take note of the amount of our progress in that desire, and to arouse ourselves more eagerly to an increase thereof.' Now the quantity of a thing should be commensurate with its end, for instance, the quantity of a dose of medicine should be commensurate with health. And so it is becoming that prayer should last long enough to arouse the fervor of the interior desire; and when it exceeds this measure, so that it cannot be continued any longer without causing weariness, it should be discontinued.

. . . In this case, short prayers and ejaculations may be used." [18]

Moreover, "one may pray continually, either through having a continual desire, or by praying at certain fixed times, though interruptedly, or by reason of the effect, whether in the person who prays (because he remains more devout even after praying), or in some other person (as when by his kindness a man incites another person to pray for him), even when he himself has ceased from praying and rests." [19] "To pray always," therefore, does not mean to keep God actually in mind all the time; this is not possible; but it means to think often of God, to remain united with Him through grace, and thus to maintain and foster an obedient spirit.

Since, on the one hand, the cause of prayer is the desire of charity, which above all is directed towards the attainment of eternal salvation, and, on the other hand, we can never have a full and comprehensive knowledge of the best means to this sublime end, we must pray with resignation. We pray with Christian resignation when we pray "in the name of

[18] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 83, a. 14.
[19] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 83, a. 14.

Jesus Christ." When we pray in the name of our Lord, who makes continual intercession for us, His prayer sanctifies ours. Most of all is this the case when we ascend the mystical Calvary and assist devoutly at the continuation of the Sacrifice of the Cross. Whilst we are *praying the Mass,* which is one of the best ways of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, our prayers become well-nigh all-powerful. To attend Mass thus is to take one's stand beneath the Cross and plead with the Heavenly Father through the merits of His beloved Son.

Again, when we are in the state of grace and follow the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we may confidently leave the outcome of our prayer with the Heavenly Father: "Although man cannot by himself know what he ought to pray for, the Spirit helpeth our infirmity, since by inspiring us with holy desires, He makes us ask for what is right. Hence Our Lord says, (St. John 4, 24), that true adorers must 'adore . . . in spirit and in truth.' When we (thus) in our prayers ask for things concerning our salvation, we conform our will to God's, of Whom it is written (1 Tim. 2, 4): 'He will have all men to be saved.' For, God

so invites us to take good things, that we may approach to them not by the steps of the body, but by pious desires and devout prayers." [20]

Thus, too, by following the inspirations of the indwelling Holy Spirit and keeping our soul free from grievous sin, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. If God withholds that which we ask in prayers of this kind, it is in order to give us something better. "So dear are our prayers to God that He has destined His angels to present them to Him as soon as they are offered," says St. Alphonsus. God owes it to Himself to answer every prayer offered in the name of His only-begotten Son. We have then in prayer one of the richest sources of divine help. Devout prayer is always beneficial to him who offers it. The saints of God obtained their present beatitude because they persevered in prayer unto the end of their probation.

"The effect of prayer is threefold. The first is an effect which is common to all acts quickened by charity, and this is merit. In order to realize this effect, it is not necessary that prayer should be attentive throughout; because the force of the original intention with

[20] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 83, a. 5.

which one sets about praying renders the whole prayer meritorious as is the case with other meritorious acts. The second effect of prayer is proper thereto, and consists in impetration; because, as Saint Gregory says, God hears not the prayer of those who have no intention of praying. The third effect of prayer is that which it produces at once; this is the spiritual refreshment of the mind, and for this effect attention is a necessary condition: wherefore it is written (1. Cor. 14, 14), 'If I pray in a tongue . . . my understanding is without fruit.' It must be observed, however, that there are three kinds of attention that can be brought to vocal prayer: one which attends to the words, lest we say them wrong; another which attends to the sense of the words, and a third, which attends to the end of prayer, namely, God, and to the thing we are praying for. This last kind of attention is most necessary, and even idiots are capable of it." [21]

Distractions are, of course, to be banished, for when they are wilful, the prayer is of no avail. "This people honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me" (St. Matt. 15, 8). Still, if we find it difficult to keep

[21] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. II, 2, qu. 83, a. 13.

recollected, we are not to give up prayer on this account; for whilst praying, we are engaged in a meritorious work. Without becoming impatient with our poor, weak selves, we are to fill out the prescribed time and earnestly to strive to improve the quality of our prayer. Every good prayer is beholden to God. If we strive to pray with faith and devotion, our prayers will be efficacious and meritorious. The Angelic Doctor is plain on this point: "Prayer has a twofold efficacy in respect of a future effect, namely, efficacy in meriting, because it proceeds from charity as its root, the proper object of which is the eternal good that we merit to enjoy. Yet prayer proceeds from charity through the virtue of religion, of which prayer is an act. For the offering of prayer itself to God belongs to religion, while the desire for the thing that we pray to be accomplished belongs to charity. Faith is necessary in reference to God, to whom we pray; that is, we need to believe that we can obtain from Him what we seek. Humility is necessary on the part of the person praying, because he recognizes his neediness. Devotion, too, is necessary, but this belongs to religion, for it is its first act and a necessary condition for all its

secondary acts. As to its efficacy in impetrating, prayer derives this from the grace of God, to whom we pray, and who instigates us to pray. Therefore St. Augustine says: 'God never refuses to grant prayers, since in His loving kindness He urges us not to faint in praying.' " [22] Hence it is that four conditions are laid down, namely, "to ask,—things for salvation,—piously,—perseveringly; when all these four concur, we always obtain what we ask for."

Nothing can surpass God's desire to reward us for what we do out of charity. And this reward is beyond our power to conceive. "I will be thy reward," He says, "exceeding great." His temporal reward for devout prayer consists in His abiding presence in the soul through loving friendship. One who serves God prayerfully in this life, is the object of a special Providence. The man of prayer, moreover, goes Godward and is sure to have true peace and happiness.

A very good kind of prayer is that which consists in reflecting or meditating piously on some religious truth or commandment. The Holy Ghost complains about the lack of

[22] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 83, a. 15.

meditative prayer when He says: "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart" (Jer. 12, 11). To "consider in the heart" is to meditate prayerfully. It signifies to ponder the truths of religion in the light of eternity and with reference to one's daily duties.

Everyone who is able to learn revealed truths, to think them over, and, finally, to love God, is able to meditate. The Christian who meditates on the ways and means of salvation will find this an exercise both needful and beneficial to his spiritual welfare. And the sinner who begins to meditate for a short time daily will soon be able to regain the path leading Godward.

No better general subject for meditation can be chosen than the life of Jesus Christ. "Matters concerning the Godhead are, in themselves, the strongest incentive to love and consequently to devotion, because God is supremely lovable; yet, such is the weakness of the human mind that it needs a guiding hand, not only to the knowledge, but also to the love of divine things, by means of certain sensible objects. Chief among these is the humanity of Christ, according to the words of the Pref-

ace, that through knowing God visibly, we may be caught up to the love of things invisible. Therefore matters relating to Christ's humanity are the chief incentive to devotion, leading us thither as by a guiding hand." [23] Meditation, therefore, on the mysteries of the Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Our Lord opens up one of the most direct paths Godward.

The Holy Rosary, too, is for this very reason highly commendable. The Rosary is both a meditative and a vocal prayer. As a meditation the purpose of this beautiful prayer is to recall to mind the consoling events or mysteries of Our Saviour's life. It concludes with meditations on the Assumption and Coronation of the Blessed Virgin, thus encouraging us with the hope of bliss eternal. If one prays the Rosary daily, he will obtain the grace of loving and serving the Divine Exemplar in imitation of Mary, and thus merit life everlasting. How touching the meditation on the Sorrowful Mysteries! "Nothing," says St. Francis of Assisi, "gives me so much delight as to think on the life and passion of Our Lord . . . Were I to live to the end of the

[23] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 82, a. 3.

world, I should stand in need of no other book."

And is there anything that could inspire us with greater confidence in our future Judge than the wound in His Sacred Heart? Jesus Christ is both God and Man. He became man in order to reconcile us with the Heavenly Father. Every human being may confidently say with St. Paul: "Christ died for me,"—to save *me* from eternal perdition; He was wounded and bruised that *I* might have life everlasting with Him in Heaven. The price paid for the ransom of *my* soul was the very life-blood of Jesus, my God, Saviour, and future Judge. Is not He, who does the more, also willing to do the less? "Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friends." Let us then in our prayers have unbounded confidence in God the Father, through the merits of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. "Amen, amen, I say unto you, if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you" (St. John 16, 23). "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (St. John 14, 13).

There are certain times when the duty to

ask God's help is more urgent than usual. We cannot, for example, hope to spend the day in God's grace, service, and friendship, if we do not begin it with prayer. When we awake in the morning, why not thank God for the blessed gift of another day, and, at the same time, beg His grace to spend it well? Among the forty thousand or more who died during the previous night not a single one would fail to do this, were he given another lease on life. Then, too, is there anyone who could recall at night the many blessings that he received during the day, without offering a prayer of thanksgiving? How ungrateful to neglect one's night prayer! The devout Christian will never think of retiring for the night without saying his prayers. What an edifying and salutary custom,—one that seems alas to be going into desuetude,—for the members of a family to say their night prayers in common! "Where two or more are gathered in My name," says Jesus, "I am in their midst."

Then, too, we should beg the Mother of God, the Guardian Angel, and our patron saints to intercede for us. Surely those who are near the throne of the Divine Majesty are interested in us and always ready to help us in

answer to our prayers: "Each of the blessed must needs see in the Divine Essence as many other things as the perfection of his happiness requires. For the perfection of a man's happiness requires him to have whatever he will, and to will nothing amiss: and each one wills with a right will to know what concerns himself. Hence, since no rectitude is lacking to the saints, they wish to know what concerns themselves, and consequently it follows that they know it in the Word. Now, it pertains to their glory that they help the needy to secure salvation: for thus they become God's co-operators, than which nothing is more Godlike. Wherefore it is evident that the saints are cognizant of such things as are required to help us to save our souls, and so it is manifest that they know, in the Word, the vows, prayers, and devotions of those who have recourse to their assistance." [24] The saints of God, therefore, know our needs, and are willing to assist us, provided we ask them to do so.

Christian charity requires us to supplicate God's aid and perfection, not only for ourselves, but also for our fellowmen. Prayer flows from the "desire of charity": hence, as

[24] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* III, Supp., qu. 72, a. 1.

charity must include the neighbor—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,"—so also must intercessory prayer include him. It matters little whether he is a friend or an enemy, near by or far away, alive or dead; we have the duty to pray for all who stand in need of God's help.

Since the Poor Souls in Purgatory are the most helpless of God's friends, we have a special obligation to offer suffrages for them. Besides, "whatever our piety and charity inspires us to do for the departed, becomes great merit for ourselves; and in the next life we shall receive a hundred-fold for what we have done for them," says St. Ambrose. It is certain that whosoever passes out of this world in the state of sin, and separated from God, shall be declared unfit for the company of the angels and saints. Those who die in venial sin must suffer the cleansing flames of that middle state called Purgatory. No one can "go forth from this prison until the last farthing shall have been paid." "The Apostle says that the man 'who builds of wood, hay, stubble, shall be saved, yet so as by fire': He will suffer punishment, but not everlasting. Now the debt of temporal punishment belongs properly to

venial sin.—Venial sins at times insinuate themselves into those who have a care for earthly things, and are designated by wood, hay, and stubble. For just as these are stored in a house without belonging to the house itself and can be burnt, the house remaining intact, so also venial sins are multiplied in a man, while the spiritual edifice remains, and for them man suffers fire, either that of temporal trials in this life, or the fire of Purgatory after this life, and yet he himself is saved for ever." [25]

That there should be a purgative process of some kind in the next world seems reasonable, when we reflect on the malice of sin and the holiness of God. Almighty God is holiness itself. By His very essence, He necessarily loves what is good and hates what is evil. Could the Sovereign Lord be indifferent to offenses against Him, He would cease to be God. Every sin must of necessity be an abomination in His sight. Every sin, too, pollutes the soul of him who commits it, and makes him unworthy of the company of God and the angels. Even the smallest sins must be removed from the soul before man can enter Heaven, for

[25] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. II, 1, qu. 89, a. 2.

"nothing defiled shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven." No one realizes this truth more perfectly than do the Poor Souls. They now fully understand the infinite holiness of God, whom they offended so often during life. Conscious of their unworthiness to enter the heavenly domain and mingle with the saints, they most ardently desire to become free from all sin and its temporal punishment.

Purgatory is an evidence also of God's mercy. The Sovereign Lord is infinitely merciful as well as infinitely just and holy. Hence it is that even after their probation here on earth, He permits men to expiate their faults, and thus to regain their pristine holiness. He "whose attribute it is always to show mercy and to spare," allows His justice to be tempered by mercy. "Mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed" (Ps. 84, 11).

That it is a holy practice to pray for the souls of the departed has ever been the teaching of the one true Church. After winning a battle against the enemies of God's chosen people, the victorious leader—Judas Machabeus —ordered that sacrifices and prayers be offered for the slain: "Making a gathering,

[he] sent 12,000 drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifices to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection. For if he had not hoped that they who were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead" (2 Mach. 12, 43).

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became incarnate in order to redeem mankind, confirmed the universal belief in a future middle state. "Whosoever," He said, "shall speak (a word) against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor the in the world to come" (St. Matt. 12, 32). From these words we must infer that there are sins which can be forgiven and expiated in the world to come. But where? Surely not in hell: for the Saviour repeatedly alludes to hell as a place of "eternal woe," whose flames shall not be extinguished. "The wicked," He says, "shall go into everlasting punishment"; whilst Purgatory He compares to a prison, whence the debtor is not to "go forth till he shall have paid the last farthing." The doctrine of Purgatory is also taught by St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, where he speaks of some who "shall [indeed] be saved, yet so as by fire."

There was never a period in the history of the Catholic Church when she did not pray for the dead, and thus put the doctrine of Purgatory into practice. The oldest as well as the most recently published Massbooks contain a special office and prayers for the dead. St. John Chrysostom declares that "Christians, from the very beginning, prayed during Mass for the departed, and this by order of the Apostles."

The man of faith cares little about an ostentatious funeral, but he does provide, if possible, for the future welfare of his soul. And indeed, it is difficult to understand how fine eulogies, floral displays, or brass-bands could furnish the dead with a passport to Heaven. The pious suffrages of the Church Militant alone can help the Suffering Church. Hence, when the sad news that someone has been summoned into eternity reaches the practical Catholic, his first thought is to pray for the deceased. His holy religion teaches him to intercede with God for his departed brethren and thus to practise one of the most beautiful and efficacious forms of Christian charity.

Religion and affection urge us to pray for those of our friends and relatives who set out

upon a journey. And when we learn that they are exposed to some extraordinary peril of soul or body, we hasten to secure God's assistance by offering special prayers or holy Masses in their behalf. Why, then, should we not do the same for the Poor Souls? They, too, are engaged on a journey, yea, the greatest of all journeys, that from earth to Heaven. We prayed for them whilst they were still in the flesh, why should we not do so now when they are out of the flesh? Then we prayed for their souls; this we can and ought to do now also.

It is misleading to speak of the Poor Souls as dead; the only soul that can be called dead is the soul in mortal sin, for a grievous offense against God destroys sanctifying grace, which is the principle of supernatural life. We believe that our departed are on the Godward path. Although we fondly hope that they are in possession of their true home,—the celestial paradise,—we cannot know whether they have yet reached that blessed goal.

It is a serious mistake to imagine that those who appeared to excel in the practice of virtue are not to be remembered in our prayers. So long as one has not been canonized or beatified by the Church, there is reason for be-

lieving that he may need the prayers of the faithful here on earth. Who is so perfect as to be without the least moral blemish? Who so holy as to be worthy of becoming one with the all-holy God? The Poor Souls, because of their unworthiness, are exiles from their true land. Of themselves they are unable to proceed on the path Godward. The time of their probation is forever passed. They can do naught now but suffer and expiate. How consoling to know that we can assist them! It is within our power to pay the debt of their offenses and negligences. Our holy faith teaches us that Almighty God mercifully accepts the prayers, good works, indulgences, and holy Masses offered by us for the souls detained in Purgatory. No prayer or good work in behalf of the suffering souls in Purgatory has ever been or ever shall be lost. "Prayer," says the great Bishop of Hippo, "is a key with which we can unlock the prison of the Poor Souls."

In the State of Kentucky there is a celebrated place called "Crystal Cave." Upon entering it, the tourist at first regrets having gone to such a dark, gloomy, and weird place. Suddenly the guide directs a strong flash-light towards the ceiling. Ah, what a magic change!

The bright light is now reflected from millions of crystals that glimmer and sparkle in all their variegated designs and colors. What a striking image of Purgatory! The Poor Souls are detained on their journey Godward in a dark and dismal prison. Our suffrages are so many stars of hope that appear in the firmament of that abode of banishment and gladden its inmates. God grant that these spiritual constellations may ever increase in number and brightness till perpetual light shall break upon the very last one of Heaven's exiles!

By using our blessed privilege to help the Poor Souls we prove that we have genuine charity. From their dreary prison they cry out to us: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me!" (Job, 19, 21). No prayers are more thoroughly Christian than those addressed to God for the Poor Souls. Suffrages for the dead unite the members of the one true Church in the closest bonds of Christian charity. It binds together the members of the Church Militant on earth, the Church Triumphant in Heaven, and the Suffering Church in Purgatory. Prayers for the dead help all

men—the living and the departed—onward and upward to the one last source of true peace and happiness, where all shall merge in never-ending bliss. This pious devotion, more than any other, will procure for those who cherish it that greatest of divine gifts,—a happy death and favorable sentence; for, says the Eternal Truth, "blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (St. Matt., 5, 7).

There is, then, nothing more salutary than devout prayer. What a blessing to himself and to others is a man of prayer! Could anyone do better than habitually keep his mind and heart raised to God in adoration and thanksgiving? Or could anything be more advantageous to us than to implore God's forgiveness of our own transgressions and those of our fellowmen? Is it any wonder that the loving Jesus reminds us that "we ought always to pray, and not to faint" (St. Luke 18, 1)? And that St. Paul bids us "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5, 17)? "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10, 31). Jesus Himself is our Model: "I do always," He says, "whatever pleases my Father." We, too, can and should lead a life of prayer. The essence of a

good prayer is the readiness to do the will of our Father, who is in Heaven; hence, by keeping our will conformed to God's will, we "pray always."

Although to omit "to pray always" in a restricted sense, is not in every instance an offense against God, yet when this occurs through lukewarmness and indifference, it surely means the loss of an opportunity to get into closer touch with God. It likewise means to forfeit those favors which God is seeking to give in answer to our prayers. And why should anyone be remiss or negligent in serving the apprenticeship of an art that he hopes to practise in Heaven,—the art of living forever in constant and loving converse with God? It would, indeed, be well for us were we "placed in a void, where we could see only God, hear none but His sweet voice, and be obliged to think of Him always." For the one thing worth while in this world is that prayerful communing with God which merits the possession of Him in eternity.

The earnest and constant endeavor to "pray always and not to faint" increases our joy and peace, for it expands our capacity for God, the source of all true happiness. "In God are

found all delights and pleasures, all that recreates and charms, all consolations and all joys, all beauty and felicity, all beatitude and the consummation of beatitude. It is from God that what is sweet derives its sweetness, what is luminous its splendor, what is living its life, what has feeling its sensation, what moves its power, what has understanding its knowledge, what is perfect its perfection, and what is good its goodness."[26] How, then, can prayerful communion with God fail to be a rich source of joy, peace, and merit for time and eternity?

Prayers of thanksgiving, which instinctively rise from a grateful heart, surely are very pleasing to our Heavenly Father. In our petty troubles and difficulties we are apt to overlook the many favors we receive daily and hourly from Him who created us and placed us here. Let us be thankful! "Be instant in prayer, watching in it in thanksgiving" (Col. 4, 2). In prayers of thanksgiving such as the *Magnificat,* the *Benedictus,* the *Te Deum,* and the Psalter, we re-echo the thanks and praises of the celestial choirs, who sing eternal hallelujahs to the Lord God Almighty.

[26] Lessius, *The Names of God* (tr. by Campbell, p. 170).

The Psalter is particularly suited to express thanks to God for His manifold benefits. The inspired singer, King David, in rapturous delight sounds the praises of the loving care and all-pervading Providence of God thus:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: O Lord my God, Thou art exceedingly great. Thou hast put on praise and beauty: and art clothed with light as with a garment.

"Who stretchest out the Heaven like a pavilion: who coverest the highest rooms thereof with water.

"Who makest the clouds Thy chariot: who walkest upon the wings of the winds.

"Who makest Thy angels spirits: and Thy ministers a burning fire.

"Who hast founded the earth upon its own bases: it shall not be moved for ever and ever.

"The deep like a garment is its clothing: above the mountains shall the waters stand.

"At Thy rebuke they shall flee; at the voice of Thy thunder they shall fear.

"The mountains ascend and the plains descend into the place which Thou hast founded for them.

"Thou hast set a bound which they shall not

pass over; neither shall they return to cover the earth.

"Thou sendest forth springs in the vales: between the midst of the hills the waters shall pass.

"All the beasts of the field shall drink: the wild asses shall expect in their thirst.

"Over them the birds of the air shall dwell: from the midst of the rocks they shall give forth their voices.

"Thou waterest the hills from Thy upper rooms: the earth shall be filled with the fruits of Thy works:

"Bringing forth grass for cattle, and herbs for the service of men.

"That Thou mayest bring bread out of the earth, and that wine may cheer the heart of man.

"That he may make the face cheerful with oil: and that bread may strengthen man's heart.

"The trees of the field shall be filled, and the cedars of Libanus which He hath planted: there the sparrows shall make their nests.

"The highest of them is the house of the heron. The high hills are a refuge for the harts, the rock for the irchins.

"He hath made the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

"Thou hast appointed darkness, and it is night: in it shall all the beasts of the woods go about:

"The young lions roaring after their prey, and seeking their meat from God.

"The sun ariseth, and they are gathered together: and they shall lie down in their dens.

"Man shall go forth to his work, and to his labor until the evening.

"How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is filled with Thy riches.

"So is this great sea, which stretcheth wide its arms: there are creeping things without number:

"Creatures little and great. There the ships shall go.

"This seadragon which Thou hast formed to play therein: all expect of Thee that Thou give them food in season.

"What Thou givest to them they shall gather up: when Thou openest Thy hand, they shall all be filled with food.

"But if Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled: Thou shalt take away their

breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust.

"Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created: and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

"May the glory of the Lord endure forever: the Lord shall rejoice in His works.

"He looketh upon the earth, and maketh it tremble: He toucheth the mountains and they smoke.

"I will sing to the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being." (Psalm 103.)

TO THE TRIUNE GOD

For Milky Way, and sun and earth,
For night and day, and land of birth,
For seas and leas, and smiling brooks,
For flocks and crops, and pleasant nooks,
O Father dear, we thank Thee.

For humble birth in Juda's cave,
For ceaseless toil mankind to save,
For exile drear in Egypt-land,
For cruel death at man's own hand,
O Jesus dear, we thank Thee.

For wholesome fear of Thy just ire,
For faith to see the purging fire,
For gifts that banish sin's foul blight,
For soothing peace of Heaven's light,
O Holy Ghost, we thank Thee.

CHAPTER VII

REST IN GOD

But one may occupy the throne
Within the palace of [our] heart;
If [we] the true King will not own,
Behold [our] kingdom falls apart!

L. M. Loerke.

THE Apostles Creed epitomizes the principal truths of revelation pertaining to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. "I believe in God the Father." Here we have the basic reason why we should love God. In this prayer we profess the firm conviction that the Almighty Creator of Heaven and earth is our common Father, and, therefore, is deserving of a child's best love.

We can understand the physical relation that exists between parents and their children,—a relation of parental love and authority on the one hand, and of filial obedience on the other. Could there be a closer bond of

union in the natural order than the one established by parenthood? Now, the union that exists between the Heavenly Father and us, His children, is by nature of a closer and nobler kind than that which obtains in physical parenthood; and by means of supernatural grace we become children of God by adoption and heirs of eternal glory. "The perfect idea of paternity and filiation," says St. Thomas, "is to be found in God the Father, and in God the Son, because one is the nature and glory of the Father and the Son. But in the creature filiation is found in relation to God, not in a perfect manner, since the Creator and the creature have not the same nature; but by way of a certain likeness, which is the more perfect the nearer we approach to the true idea of filiation . . . Of the rational creature [God is the Father] by reason of the likeness of His image, according to the text, 'Is He not thy Father, who possessed, and made, and created thee?' (Deut. 32, 6). And of others He is the Father by similitude of grace, and these are also called adoptive sons, as ordained to the heritage of eternal glory by the gift of grace which they have received, according to the text, 'The Spirit Himself gives testimony to

our spirit, that we are the sons of God: and if sons, heirs also (Rom. 8, 16, 17).'" [1]

Since the Heavenly Father has created us for Himself, and God the Son redeemed us, and God the Holy Ghost sanctified us unto life everlasting, we must strive to become worthy of our high calling—Heaven. If we would repose in God hereafter, we must become united to Him in this life.

It is consoling to realize that everyone who truly and earnestly endeavors to become perfect, advances Godward: "All things, by desiring their own perfection, desire God Himself, inasmuch as the perfections of all things are so many similitudes of the Divine Being." [2] He, therefore, who habitually strives to become perfect, implicitly desires God and thus increases the bond of union between God and himself.

On the other hand, he who is indifferent to moral rectitude, is indifferent towards God. He is culpable, too, and deserving of punishment. For we belong wholly and entirely to God, our Creator, who requires us to love, serve, and adore Him. To strive always to do

[1] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 33, a. 3.
[2] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 6, a. 1.

this, is to advance in moral perfection. As a consequence of the course of conduct pursued by the individual, either Satan or the Holy Ghost is enthroned in his soul. The two cannot abide in one and the same person. Nor can one be beyond the influence of both and belong to neither. Satan is expelled when one becomes united to God by means of that "charity which is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given us" (Rom. 5, 5); and the Holy Ghost must leave the soul the very instant one separates oneself from God by committing a grievous sin.

That God dwells in the just is beyond cavil. God is in all things by His presence, power, and substance; still He is present more familiarly in some by grace. "God is said to be in a thing in two ways; in one way after the manner of an efficient cause; and thus He is in all things created by Him; in another way He is in things as the object of operation is in the operator; and this is proper to the operation of the soul, according as the thing known is in the one who knows, and the thing desired is in the one desiring. In this second way God is especially in the rational creature, which knows and loves Him actually or habitually.

And because the rational creature possesses this prerogative by grace, He is said to be thus in the saints by grace . . . No other perfection, except grace added to substance renders God present in anything as the object known and loved; therefore, only grace constitutes a special mode of God's existence in man." [3]

By means of divine grace, therefore, man becomes a shrine of the Triune God. Our supreme effort must be to possess God more and more perfectly in this world, in order that we may abide with Him forever in the world to come. If we go through life holding God's hand, we cannot go astray. Now, "God said [to Moses] thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: He Who Is has sent me to you" (Exod. 3, 14). And then follows the Decalogue. The message, therefore, is: I, God, the Supreme Lord, your Creator, command you to do my will. I am your Creator, Preserver, Supreme Lord, and Judge. Without this revelation from the Heavenly Father we should be doomed to a weary and tortuous journey through the darksome valley of this life. With it we know that we come from God and shall return to Him—from God the Creator to

[3] *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 8, a. 3.

God the Consummator. The path is straight and well defined; for God's consoling message to mankind was not for the Church in its primitive state only. The covenant made to the chosen people of old was extended to all the nations of the earth by Jesus Christ, our Divine Redeemer. There is an unbroken tradition running through the Old and New Testament.

Jesus Christ is the central figure uniting the New Dispensation with the Old. When "the fulness of time" came, God sent His Son into the world to redeem us, and to indicate more clearly the way to temporal and eternal happiness. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of mankind, showed us a "more excellent way" than that revealed to the chosen people in the Old Law. Henceforth man is to be actuated by the love rather than by the fear of God. "God is charity; and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him" (1 St. John 4, 16). "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father: and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (St. John 14, 21).

The path Godward marked out to us,

therefore, is the path of charity. The order of charity or supernatural love, which we are now to learn and put into practice, is not the same as the order by which man comes to the knowledge of God. In fact, the order of knowledge is just the reverse of the order of love. We cannot know God immediately. In learning to know God we begin with the things that come under the perception of our senses; in loving God we begin with God, and direct our love to all else outside of God for His sake and as He wills. Supernatural love begins where knowledge ends. "In itself the very order of things is such that God is knowable and lovable for Himself, since He is essentially truth and goodness, whereby other things are known and loved; but with regard to us, since our knowledge is derived through the senses, those things are knowable first which are nearer to our senses, and the last term of knowledge is that which is most remote from our senses. Accordingly, love, even in this state of life, tends to God first, and flows on from Him to other things, and in this sense charity loves God immediately, and other things through God. Knowledge begins from creatures, and tends to God, and love be-

gins with God as the last end, and passes on to creatures." [4]

Now, man can love God and his neighbor from a natural or a supernatural motive. We know from revelation that a mere natural love does not suffice. How, then, is man to supernaturalize his love and save his soul? To love God on account of the divine goodness which we behold manifested in His works in countless ways, ought not be difficult; for in doing so, we but follow one of the primary impulses of our nature. All things in the visible creation lead to God and reveal his goodness. It cannot be difficult, therefore, for anyone who perseveringly seeks God, to discover that all creatures are so many reminders of God's wisdom and boundless goodness; for wisdom consists chiefly in using creatures in the manner or measure in which they become useful in raising mind and heart to the all-good God who gave them to us.

Some of the ancient moralists well understood man's foremost duty of loving God, and of meditating on Him. Epictetus, for example, says: "If we had any sense of duty, ought we not, both in public and in private, incessantly

[4] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 27, a. 4.

praise the Deity and rehearse His benefits? Ought we not, whether we dig, or plow, or eat, sing this hymn to God: Great is God, who has supplied us with instruments to till the soil; great is God, who has given us hands, and organs of digestion; who has enabled us to grow insensibly, and to breathe in sleep. These things we ought forever to celebrate, and to make it the theme of the greatest and divinest hymn that He has given us the power to appreciate these gifts, and to use them all. . . . Were I a nightingale, I would act the part of a nightingale; were I a swan, I would act the part of a swan; but since I am a reasonable creature, it is my duty to praise God. This is my proper occupation: I do it; nor will I ever depart from this post so long as it is permitted me; and I call upon you to join in the same song." If a pagan living in the pre-Christian age deemed it man's foremost duty to praise God unceasingly, surely we, who are basking in the benign light of revelation, ought not be content with praising the Supreme Lord merely from a natural motive, or only at intervals.

The order to be observed, therefore, is to love God first, then ourselves, then our neigh-

bor, and finally all the other creatures of God. It is hard to conceive how a Christian could bestow conscious love in any other way without trespassing against both the natural and the revealed law of God. "Since God is the universal good, and under this good both man and angel and every creature is comprised, and since every creature in regard to its entire being naturally belongs to God, it follows that from natural love angel and man alike love God before themselves and with a greater love. Otherwise, if either of them loved self more than God, it would follow that natural love would be perverse, and that it would not be perfected but destroyed by charity." [5]

Now the grace of God assists and supernaturalizes nature. A well-ordered natural love is supernaturalized through the addition of divine grace. This supernatural quality enables its possessor to know and love God as the Supreme Good and the cause of beatitude. "God, in so far as He is the universal good, on whom every natural good depends, is loved by everything with natural love. So far as He is the good which of its very nature beatifies all with supernatural beatitude, He is loved

[5] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. I, qu. 60, a. 5.

with the love of charity." [6] An act of charity or supernatural love is, therefore, not merely an act of good-will. It is this and more. Man disposes himself for the gift of charity by means of good-will. "Peace on earth to men of good will." To have good will is the necessary pre-requisite for obtaining the supernatural love that brings peace and salvation.

"Good-will is neither friendship nor love, but the beginning of friendship. Now, charity is friendship. Therefore, good will is not the same as to love considered as an act of charity. Good will properly speaking is that act of the will whereby we wish well to another. This act of the will differs from actual love, considered not only as being in the sensitive appetite, but also as being in the intellective appetite or will. For the love which is in the sensitive appetite is a passion, and every passion seeks its object with a certain eagerness. The passion of love is not aroused suddenly, but is born of an earnest consideration of the object loved; wherefore the Philosopher, showing the difference between good-will and the love which is a passion, says that good-will does not imply impetuosity or desire, that is to say, has not

[6] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. I, qu. 60, a. 5

an eager inclination, because it is by the sole judgment of his reason that one man wishes another well. Again such like love arises from previous acquaintance, whereas good-will sometimes arises suddenly. The love, which is in the intellective appetite differs from good-will, because it denotes a certain union of affections between the lover and the beloved, inasmuch as the lover deems the beloved as somewhat united to him, or belonging to him, and so tends toward him. On the other hand, good-will is a simple act of the will, whereby we wish a person well, even without presupposing the aforesaid union of the affections with him. Accordingly, to love, considered as an act of charity, includes good-will, but such dilection or love adds union of affections, wherefore the Philosopher says that good-will is a beginning of friendship." [7]

There is, therefore, an essential difference between natural and supernatural love or charity. The man who possesses a mere natural love of God and his neighbor may be devoid of ill-will towards them. One may even have a very intense and passionate love of God and man from a natural motive. Moreover, a

[7] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. II, 2, qu. 27, a. 2.

man who is actuated by a natural love of God may be a strict observer of the will of God as made known to him by the voice of conscience. So long as it remains a natural love, however, it cannot save his soul. For God must be loved from a supernatural motive. He has created us and raised us to the supernatural order by means of His grace. Divine grace is something natural to God, but supernatural to us. We are offered this supernatural quality in order that by it we can become united to God, and can love Him in a most excellent and salutary manner. God wants our love, and if we co-operate with His grace, we can eventually arrive at the perfect love of God. "There is one special mode [of God's presence] belonging to the rational nature wherein God is said to be present as the object known is in the knower, and the beloved is in the lover. And since the rational creature by its own operation of knowledge and love attains to God Himself, according to this special mode God is said not only to exist in the rational creature, but also to dwell therein as in His own temple." [8] A special mode therefore, of God's indwelling, "as in His own temple," is ef-

[8] St. Thomas.

fected by means of charity or supernatural love. He who thus possesses God by means of sanctifying grace or charity, leads a meritorious life and enjoys interior peace and joy of heart. To strive after a closer union with God should, therefore, be a pleasant duty. A constant endeavor to become more closely united to the Supreme Good must necessarily increase one's joy, for it is unnatural not to love God.

"To love God above all things is natural to man and to every nature, not only rational but irrational, and even to inanimate nature according to the manner of love which can belong to each creature. The reason of this is that it is natural to all to seek and love things according as they are naturally fit to be sought and loved, since all things act according as they are naturally fit. Now it is manifest that the good of the part is for the good of the whole; hence every thing, by its natural appetite and love, loves its own proper good on account of the common good of the whole universe, which is God. Hence, Dionysius says that God leads everything to the love of Himself." [9]

[9] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. II, qu. 109, a. 3.

The supernatural love of God also implies the supernatural love of His image, *i. e.,* our fellow-man. However, though we are obliged to have charity towards all men without exception, yet we are neither obliged nor able to love all in the same degree or with equal intensity. Not even God does this. "Love of the neighbor can be unequal in two ways: first, on the part of the good we wish our friend. In this respect we love all men equally out of charity, because we wish them all the one same generic good, namely, everlasting happiness. Secondly, love is said to be greater through its action being more intense; and in this way we ought not to love all equally. . . . As regards beneficence, we are bound to observe this inequality because we cannot do good to all. And as regards benevolence, our neighbors are not all equally related to God; some are nearer to Him, by reason of their greater goodness, and these we ought, out of charity, to love more than those who are not so near to Him." [10]

The love of our neighbor, called charity, must extend to all men without exception. Those who hate or harm us are also to be

[10] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 26, a. 6.

loved. We may never return evil for evil, or harbor hatred for hatred. Even sinners and wicked people are to be loved supernaturally. "When it is said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor,' it is evident that we ought to look upon every man as our neighbor. Now sinners do not cease to be men, for sin does not destroy nature. Therefore, we ought to love sinners out of charity. . . . Two things may be considered in the sinner, his nature and his guilt. According to his nature, which he has from God, he has a capacity for happiness, on the fellowship of which charity is based. On the other hand, their guilt is opposed to God, and is an obstacle to happiness. Therefore, in respect of their guilt, whereby they are opposed to God, all sinners are to be hated, even one's father or kindred, according to St. Luke, 14, 26. For it is our duty to hate in the sinner his being a sinner, and to love in him his being a man capable of bliss; and this is to love him truly out of charity for God's sake." [11]

This "hatred of a person's evil is equivalent to love of his good. Hence, it belongs to charity. . . . When, therefore, our friends fall into sin, we ought to help them more readily

[12] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 25, a. 6.

to regain virtue than to recover money had they lost it, forasmuch as virtue is more akin to friendship than money. When, however, they fall into very great wickedness, and become impenitent, we ought no longer to show them friendliness." [12] . . . "It is therefore, permissible, and it may even be advisable, to be unfriendly to a degree of resorting to force against a wicked person who at the same time is one's enemy. It is lawful to attack one's enemies, that they may be restrained from sin: and this is for their own good and for the good of others. Consequently it is even lawful in praying to ask that temporal evils be inflicted on our enemies, in order that they may mend their ways. Thus prayer and deed will not be contrary to one another." [13]

No one, therefore, is to be excluded from our love. The charity which we must entertain towards all men, even towards enemies, "requires that in loving God and our neighbor, we should not exclude our enemies from the love given to our neighbor in general." We are not obliged, however, to manifest a special love or friendship towards those who seek to

[12] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 25. a. 6.
[13] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 23, a. 9.

harm us, except when they are in want, and need our assistance. "Love of one's enemies may be considered as specially directed to them, namely, that we should have a special movement of love towards them. Charity does not require this absolutely, because it does not require that we should have a special movement of love to every individual man, since this would be impossible. Nevertheless charity does require that in respect of our being prepared in mind, namely, that we should be ready to love our enemies individually, if the necessity were to occur. That one should actually do so, and love his enemy for God's sake, without it being necessary for him to do so, belongs to the perfection of charity." [14]

Moreover, since "to love God is natural to man and to every nature," irrational and nonsentient creatures ought to be a help and not a hindrance to us along the highways and byways leading Godward. All irrational beings by nature glorify God. Hence, each and every one of the things God has made ought to be as wings by means of which our soul rises to ever greater heights of divine love. "Creatures of themselves do not withdraw us from God, but

[14] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 25, a. 8.

lead us to Him; for 'the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made' (Rom. 1, 20). If, then, mundane creatures withdraw men from God, it is the fault of those who use them foolishly. In this way, we are told in the Book of Wisdom (14, 11), 'creatures are turned into a snare to the feet of the unwise.' And the very fact that creatures can thus withdraw us from God, proves that they came from the all-good God, for they cannot lead the foolish away from God except by allurements of some good that they have from Him." [15]

Hence, "God ought to be loved chiefly and before all out of charity; for He is loved as the cause of happiness, whereas our neighbor is loved as receiving together with us a share of happiness from Him. A thing is a cause of love in two ways: first, as being the reason for loving. In this way good is the cause of love, since each thing is loved according to its measure of goodness. Secondly, a thing causes love, as being a way to acquire love. It is in this way that seeing is the cause of loving, not as though a thing were lovable according as it is visible, but because by seeing a thing we

[15] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 65, a. 1.

are led to love it. . . . Since our neighbor is more visible to us, he is the first lovable object we meet with, because the soul learns, from those things it knows, to love what it knows not. . . . Hence it can be argued that, if any man loves not his neighbor, neither does he love God, not because his neighbor is more lovable, but because he is the first thing to demand our love: and God is more lovable by reason of His greater goodness." [16]

God is the sovereign Good. All real goodness comes from God as from its chief and last source. The goodness that any person or thing possesses must be ascribed ultimately to God, who is the sum total of all true goodness. "God is goodness." "Any good that is not its own goodness is good by participation. Now that which is by participation presupposes something antecedent to itself, from which it derives the nature of goodness. But it is not possible to continue thus to infinity; since in final causes there is no proceeding to infinity, for the infinite is inconsistent with finality: and the good has the nature of an end. We must therefore come to some first good that is good not by participation in relation to something

[16] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. II, 2, qu. 26, a. 2.

else, but by its essence. Now this first good is God. Therefore, God is His own goodness." [17]

And God alone is His own goodness: therefore, it is said of Him, "None is good but one, that is God" (St. Mark, 10, 18). "That which is predicated essentially is said more truly than that which is predicated by participation. Now God is good by His essence, and other things are good by participation; . . . and the greatest in any genus is the cause of others in that genus: since the cause is greater than the effect. Now all things derive their ratio of goodness from God. Therefore, He is the supreme and most perfect Good. Just as that is more white which has less admixture of black, so that is better which has less admixture of evil. Now, God is most of all unmixed with evil, since in Him there is no evil, neither actual nor potential. . . . Therefore, He is the Sovereign Good." [18]

God, the Sovereign Good, made the world in order to share His goodness with it. This, too, is why He created us. "With an eternal love have I loved thee and drawn thee to me." He now preserves the life He gave because

[17] St. Thomas, *Summa Philosophica,* l. I, c. 38.
[18] St. Thomas, *Summa c. Gentiles,* l. I, c. 41.

He wishes to bestow upon us a greater measure of goodness. This follows from the very nature of the Divine Will: "Love regards good universally, whether possessed or not. Hence love is naturally the first act of the will and appetite; for which reason all the other appetitive movements presuppose love as their root and origin. For nobody desires anything nor rejoices in anything, except as a good that is loved. . . . Hence, in whomsoever there is will and appetite, there must also be love: since if the first is wanting, all that follows is also wanting. Now, will is in God, and hence we must attribute love to Him." [19] God created all things out of love. Every human being, therefore, can truthfully say: God loves me and preserves my life because He wishes to bestow still more and greater blessings upon me.

Let no one ever imagine that God harbors a grudge or hatred against him! God is incapable of hating, or wishing evil to anyone. "God's will tends to things other than Himself, inasmuch as by willing and loving His goodness, He wills it to be poured forth, as far as possible, by communicating its like-

[19] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 20, a. 1.

ness. Accordingly, that which God wills in things other than Himself, is that the likeness of His goodness be in them. Now the goodness of each thing consists in its partaking of the divine likeness: since every other goodness is nothing but a likeness of the first goodness. Therefore, God wills good to everything: and consequently He hates nothing." [20] "Thou lovest all the things that are and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made" (Wisd. 11, 25).

When God is said to hate certain things, this is to be understood metaphorically: "First, from the fact that God in loving things, and willing their good to be, wills the contrary evil not to be. Therefore He is said to hate evil, since we are said to hate that which we will not to be: according to Zach. 8, 17: 'Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his friend; and love not a false oath, for all these are the things I hate, saith the Lord.' But such things are not His effects as subsistent things, to which hatred or love are directed, properly speaking. The other way is due to God willing a greater good that cannot be without the privation of a lesser good. And

[20] *Summa c. Gentiles.*, l. I, c. 96.

thus He is said to hate since to do more than this were to love. For, in this way inasmuch as He wills the good of justice or of the order of the universe, which good is impossible without the punishment or destruction of some, He is said to hate those whose punishment or destruction He wills; according to Mal. 1, 3, 'I have hated Esau"; and the words of the psalm: 'Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity, thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie: the bloody and the deceitful man the Lord will abhor.' " [21]

Now, since God loves us and showers countless blessings upon us, we ought to love Him. Man must love, and he must needs love some one, or some thing supremely. To love is essential to the human heart. Why not, then, love God above all else? "God will be to each one the entire reason of his love, for God is man's entire good. If we make the impossible supposition that God were not man's good, He would not be man's reason for loving." [22] The bond of union between God and us is strengthened and perfected in the same degree that we regulate and purify our love and affection

[21] *Summa c. Gentiles,* l. I, c. 96.

[22] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 26, a. 13.

towards Him. We detach our hearts from creatures by loving the Creator in preference to them. Thus, too, we make room for God, and the more room we provide for Him, the more of Himself will He impart to us. Since God is the supreme Good, we ought to love Him above all.

God's goodness, moreover, is universal. It embraces all things. It reaches from one end of the universe to the other. Not even the most insignificant of His creatures are forgotten. God opens His loving Hand and "fills all with benediction." The outpouring of God's goodness is constant and unitive. God loves us more than anyone else could love us; and most of all does He love those who correspond more perfectly to His goodness.

"Since everything naturally wills or desires its own good, in its own way, if the nature of love is that the lover will or desire the good of the beloved, it follows that the lover is referred to the beloved as to a thing that is in a way one with him. Therefore, it appears that the proper notion of love consists in the affection of one tending to another as one with himself in some way: for which reason Dionysius describes love as a unitive force. Hence, the

greater the thing that makes the lover one with the beloved, the more intense is the love: for we love those who are united to us by the origin of birth, or by frequent companionship, more than those who are merely united to us by the bond of human nature. Again, the more the cause of union is deeply seated in love, the stronger the love. . . . Now the cause of all things being united to God, namely, His goodness, which all things reflect, is exceeding great and deeply seated in God, since Himself is His own goodness. Wherefore in God, not only is there true love, but also most perfect and most abiding love." [23] Hence, the more one strives to perfect God's likeness in himself, the more God loves him.

And surely it is our duty to strive to love God more and more. There could be no more liberal and disinterested love than that which God manifests towards us, His children. Hence, we ought to love Him in return with all other things, so, also, in this, by faith and municate His goodness to a thing, not that He may gain thereby, but because the very act of communicating is befitting Him as the source of goodness. Now to give not for a gain ex-

[23] St. Thomas, *Summa c. Gentiles,* l. I, c. 91.

pected from the giving, but through goodness and becomingness, is an act of liberality. Therefore, God is most liberal, and as Avicenna says, He alone can properly be called liberal, since every other agent except God gains by his action some good which is the end in view." [24]

Although God's loving goodness extends to all things without exception, yet He cannot be said to love all in the same degree. For, "nothing is due to creatures, except for something pre-existing in them, or foreknown. Again, if this is due to a creature, it must be due on account of something that precedes. And since we cannot go on indefinitely, we must come to something that depends only on the goodness of the Divine Will—which is the ultimate end. We may say, for instance, that to possess hands is due to man on account of his rational soul; and his rational soul is due to him that he may be a man; and his being man is on account of the Divine Goodness. So in every work of God, viewed at its primary source, there appears mercy. In all that follows, the power of mercy remains and works indeed with even greater force; as the influ-

[24] St. Thomas, *Summa c. Gentiles,* l. I, c. 93.

ence of the first cause is more intense than that of the second cause. For this reason God, out of the abundance of His goodness, bestows upon creatures that which is due to them more bountifully than is proportionate to their deserts, since less would suffice for preserving the order of justice than what the Divine Goodness confers; because between creatures and God's goodness there can be no proportion." [25] "God's loving one thing more than another, however, is nothing else than His willing for that thing a greater good; because God's will is the cause of goodness in things; and the reason why some things are better than others, is that God wills for them greater good. Hence it follows that He loves more the better things." [26] And furthermore, as Augustine says, "each thing that God has made is good, and taken all together, they are very good; because in them all consists the wondrous beauty of the universe." . . . "The universe, the present creation being supposed, cannot be better on account of the most beautiful order given to things by God." [27]

[25] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 21, a. 4.
[26] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 20, a. 4.
[27] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 25, a. 6.

Towards His rational creatures God has the tender "love of friendship." "Strictly speaking, God does not love irrational creatures with the love of friendship; but as it were with the love of desire, so far as He orders them to rational creatures and even to Himself. Yet this is not because He stands in need of them; but only on account of His goodness, and of the services they render to His rational creatures." [28] Man, however, is the subject of divine friendship. God pleads for our poor, miserable love and affection by being a loving friend to us. "A lover is placed outside himself, and made to pass into the object of his love, inasmuch as he wills good to the beloved and works for that good by his providence even as he works for his own. Hence Dionysius says: on behalf of the truth we must make bold to say even this, that God Himself, the cause of all things, by His abounding love and goodness, is placed outside Himself by His providence for all existing things." [29] And if God "be placed outside Himself by His providence for all existing things," how great and intense must be

[28] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 20, a. 2.
[29] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 20, a. 2.

His love for man, whom He made to His image and likeness! And have we not evidence of God's love towards us in all things and at all times?

Since God, then, manifests a most ardent, merciful, and bounteous love towards us, we in turn must love Him with all the powers of our soul. It is impossible for anyone to love God too much, or even as much as He deserves to be loved. "In all matters of appetite and action the measure is the end, because the proper reason for all that we desire or do should be taken from the end. Therefore, the end has a mode by itself, while the means take their mode from being proportionate to the end. Hence, in every art, the desire for the end is endless and unlimited, whereas there is a limit to the means; thus the physician does not put limits to health, but makes it as perfect as he possibly can; but he puts a limit to medicine. . . . Now, the end of all human actions and affections is the love of God, whereby principally we attain our last end. Wherefore the mode in the love of God, must not be taken as in a thing measured where we find too much or too little, but as in the measure itself, where there cannot be excess, and

where the more the rule is attained the better it is, so that the more we love God the better our love is." [30] To love God according to our greatest capacity must, therefore, be our constant endeavor. In striving to love God more we need have no fear of going to excess, since it is impossible to love God too much.

It depends on our free choice, therefore, whether or not we go through life Godward along the "more excellent way" of charity. If we are in the state of grace and have the firm will to love God and our neighbor supernaturally, we actually love them thus. And if we love and serve God supernaturally and perseveringly during our probation here on earth, God owes it to Himself to preserve us in His grace and to reward us with eternal life in Heaven.

"The crown of life" which is promised to all who persevere in charity unto the end, "belongs to a person in two ways; first, by God's predestination, and thus no one loses his crown; secondly, by the merit of grace; for what we merit, in a certain way is ours; and thus anyone may lose his crown by mortal sin. Another person receives that crown thus lost,

[30] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 27, a. 6.

inasmuch as he takes the former's place. For God does not permit some to fall, without raising others; according to Job, 34, 24, 'He shall break in pieces many and innumerable, and make others to stand in their stead.' Thus men are substituted in the place of the fallen angels; and the Gentiles in that of the Jews. He who is substituted for another in the state of grace, also receives the crown of the fallen in that in eternal life he will rejoice in the good the other has done, in which life he will rejoice at all good whether done by himself or by others." [31]

That we have the duty, no less than the privilege, of laboring for Heaven by worshipping God outwardly as well as inwardly is plain: "He it is that loveth me, that keepeth my commandments." We are to give to God the very best service in our power. And the endeavor to do so can become a pleasant task by remembering that we are always under the very eyes of our beloved Master and future Judge: "Walk before Me and be perfect" (Gen. 17, 1), says God to us all. The chaste Susanna fully realized the importance and advantage of living in the presence of God,

[31] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. I, qu. 23, a. 6.

when she replied to the tempter: "It is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord" (Dan. 13, 23). Yes, the eyes of God "are far brighter than the sun, and penetrate to the innermost folds of the human heart."

The illustrious educator, St. John Baptist de la Salle, directed that at frequent intervals the children confided to the members of his congregation should be taught to say aloud, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God." By this salutary practice the most important factor regulating our moral conduct can be brought vividly into consciousness and made to influence our daily lives. The habit of calling this fundamental fact to mind frequently, will before long become spontaneous, and thus one will habitually live in the presence of the Almighty.

O God, whose presence glows in all,
Within, around us, and above;
Thy word we bless, Thy name we call,
Whose word is truth, whose name is love.

That love its holy influence pour,
To keep us meek, and make us free;
And throw its binding blessing more
Round each with all, and all with Thee.

Send down its angels to our side;
Send in its calm upon the breast;
For we would know no other guide,
And we can need no other rest.

Frothingham.

The consciousness of God's nearness to us should be a consoling incentive to serve Him in public as well as in secret. What will men not do to gain the good-will and recognition of their superiors? So long as a renowned leader is present and by his word or look enthuses his followers, you will find them ready to endure every hardship, yes, even to shed their blood. Yet how trivial the reward bestowed for such noble service! One cannot give that which one does not possess. Even the greatest and most powerful leaders are weak and limited in their ability to reward. The compensation given by man for faithful and unselfish service is necessarily trivial, and is often woefully out of proportion to such service.

However, with regard to the exterior manifestations of love, we must be guided, as in all other thngs; so, also, in this, by faith and reason. "The measure of our love for God,"

says Saint Augustine, "is to love Him with our whole heart, that is, to love Him as much as He can be loved, and this belongs to the mode which is proper to the measure. An affection, whose object is subject to reason's judgment, should be measured by reason; but the object of the divine love, which is God, surpasses the judgment of reason, wherefore it is not measured by reason, but transcends it. Nor is there parity between the interior act and external acts of charity. For the interior act of charity has the character of an end, since man's ultimate good consists in his soul cleaving to God, according to Ps. 72, 28, 'it is good for me to adhere to my God'; whereas, the exterior acts are as means to the end, and so have to be measured both according to charity and according to reason." [32] Exterior acts of religion, therefore, are to be judged according to their efficacy in nourishing and perfecting the habit of charity or the supernatural love of God. A devotion, no matter how appealing it may be, is worthless unless it is able to nourish the heaven-born flame of divine love.

Our Heavenly Father, 'tis true, requires individual service in thought, word and deed.

[32] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. II, 2, qu. 27, a. 6.

He manifests His will clearly, and bids us "walk before [Him] and be perfect." However, though He longs and pleads for our poor service, and has the greater share in our good works, He gives no less than Himself in reward: "I will be thy reward exceeding great." "There is hardly ever a complete silence in our souls. God is whispering to us and encouraging us well-nigh incessantly. Whenever the sounds of the world die out in the soul, or sink low, then we hear these pleadings of God, inviting us 'to walk before Him and be perfect.' He is always beckoning us, only we do not always hear, because of the noise, hurry, and distraction that life causes as it rushes on." We ought, then, endeavor to obey the slightest inspiration of the all-good God. Thus we shall acquire an ever greater reward unto life everlasting. Our hearts should be aglow always and ever with the white heat of divine love. "Thou art verily, O my God," exclaims St. Bernard, "a most benevolent power, immutable order, eternal sweetness, creating the world to make it a participant of Thyself; vivifying it to make it feel its Creator; touching it by Thy sweet contact to make it long for Thee; dilating it to fill it with Thyself; justi-

fying it to enable it to merit; inflaming it to make it burn with zeal; fecundating it to make it fruitful; prompting it to righteousness, forming it to benevolence, moderating it to wisdom, visiting it to bring comfort; illuminating it to augment its knowledge, guarding it for immortality." If only we persevere unto the end in following "the more excellent way" of love, along which God is constantly supporting us, the unspeakable reward of God Himself will be ours in eternity. We may then firmly hope one day to be among the blessed who are most intimately united to God in heaven. They enjoy the Divine Presence in the fullest sense and degree: "Intellectual vision is of the things which are in the soul by their essence, as intelligible things are in the intellect. And thus God is in the souls of the blessed." [33]

In what manner the endeavor to "follow the more excellent way" gradually disposes the soul for that highest and sweetest kind of prayer—contemplation, is explained thus by the Angel of the Schools: "Vital operations are those whose principles are within the operator, and in virtue of which the operator

[33] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 12, a. 11.

produces such acts of itself. It happens that there exist in men not merely such natural principles of certain operations as are their natural powers, but something over and above these, such as habits inclining them like a second nature to particular kinds of operations, so that the operations become sources of pleasure. Thus, as by a similitude, any kind of work in which a man takes delight, so that his bent is toward it, his time spent in it, and his whole life ordered with a view to it, is said to be the life of that man. Hence some are said to lead a life of self-indulgence, others a life of virtue. In this way the contempative life is distinguished from the active, and thus to know God is said to be life eternal." [34]

It would, of course, be futile to seek the spiritual joy of the contemplative life along the paths of wilfulness or moral lassitude. To neglect one's routine duties in order to give more time to prayer, to spiritual reading, or to other devotional exercises, cannot lead one Godward. Hear how St. Francis de Sales exposes the fallacy of neglecting duty from a so-called pious motive: "Do not fear that the occupations imposed by obedience will draw

[34] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. I, qu. 18, a. 2.

you away from union with God; for when they are performed for God's glory, they have, instead, great power to unite us closely to Him. For how can those things separate us from God, which unite our will to His? The whole mistake arises from the failure to distinguish between being drawn away from God, and being drawn away from the sweetness found in the interior perception of God. It is true that in our occupations this sweetness is not always enjoyed (although it is sometimes in the highest degree); but in depriving ourselves of this for the love of God, we gain instead of losing. On the other hand, to quit or abandon our work with the intention of uniting ourselves to God by prayer, reading, recollection, solitude, or contemplation, would be to withdraw from God, and unite ourselves to ourselves and to our own self-love."

So long, however, as one strives to know and do God's holy will ever more perfectly, it is not only lawful, but prudent and virtuous to aspire to that intimate union with God effected by contemplation. The beginner will experience that it is difficult to meditate well, because of repeated distractions of various

kinds. But with God's grace meditative prayer will, in time, become more and more recollected and consoling. When the devout servant of God bends his efforts towards improving the quality of his prayers, and strives to commune with God "always," by ordering his life in accordance with the truths of revelation, he will, at times at least, enjoy the sweetness of contemplation.

The specific difference between contemplation and meditation is brought out clearly by Msgr. Farges. "Meditation," he says, "seeks, contemplation has found; meditation aspires to enjoyment, contemplation enjoys; meditation is work with fruit, contemplation is fruit without labor; meditation reasons, contemplation sees intuitively; meditation and the prayer of simplicity are an abstract knowledge, contemplation is a concrete and experimental knowledge; meditation makes us think of the Divine Friend, contemplation makes us feel Him present and acting; meditation and the prayer of simplicity are the fruit of industry, contemplation is passive; it is a gift of God which operates in us and without our help, provided we are docile." [85] Contempla-

[85] Mystical Phenomena, p. 58.

tion is a sweet repose in God. It is a divine gift bestowed upon the humble, fervent, and obedient. It is the choicest fruit of the interior life, and can be found only along the road leading Godward.

God wishes to communicate Himself to each one of us: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." The soul God gave us by nature yearns and aspires to ever closer union with Him. The whole economy of salvation has no purpose other than to effect, confirm, and perfect the supernatural union between the rational creature and the Creator. The individual, therefore, who remains separated from God, fails in his foremost duty, and is animated by a base selfishness or worldliness, rather than by nobility of soul. And how can anyone expect to be happy when his mode of life runs counter to his very nature? By nature, no less than by grace, we are directed towards God—the sum total of all that is good, true, and lovable. To follow this urge pertains to the very essence of religion; and, ennobled by divine grace, man's longing to be united with God easily becomes his ruling passion. That which one habitually makes his most precious treasure, will eventually be-

come the object of his supreme love and affection; for "where one's treasure is, there is his heart also." We are to live by faith and strive to become wholly absorbed in the things of God and eternity. If we fix our heart on God and persevere in prayer we may hope to find, even in this life, a sweet repose in God that is destined to endure for ever.

He who strives to become more closely united to God is sure to meet with difficulties; for "the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind. Hence it is that when man attains to the contemplation of truth, he loves it yet more, while he hates his own deficiency and the weight of his corruptible body, so as to say with the Apostle (Rom. 7, 24): 'Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Therefore Gregory says: 'When God is once known by desire and understanding, He withers all carnal pleasure in us.' . . . The delight, however, of the wayfarer's contemplation of God is imperfect as compared with the delight of contemplation in heaven, of which it is written (Ps. 35, 9): 'Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure.' Yet, though the contemplation

of Divine things which is to be had by wayfarers is imperfect, it is more delightful than all other contemplation however perfect, on account of the excellence of that which is contemplated. . . . It is sweetness exceedingly lovable; for it carries the soul away above itself, it opens heaven and discovers the spiritual world to the eyes of the mind." [36] Our Lord says in praise of contemplation (St. Luke 10, 42): "Mary hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from her." It shall not be taken away from her, because the love that is begotten of contemplation is stronger than death.

"Contemplation may be delightful on the part of its object, in so far as one contemplates that which one loves; even as bodily vision gives pleasure, not only because to see is pleasurable in itself, but because one sees a person whom one loves. Since, then, the contemplative life consists chiefly in the contemplation of God, of which charity is the motive, it follows that there is a delight in the contemplative life, not only by reason of the contemplation itself, but also by reason of the divine love. In both respects therefore, the delight

[36] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. II, 2, qu. 180, a. 7.

surpasses all human delight both because spiritual delight is greater than carnal pleasure, and because the love whereby God is loved out of charity surpasses all love. Hence it is written (Ps. 33, 9): 'O taste and see that the Lord is sweet.' " [37]

Let him who attains to this blessed state of mind and heart give thanks to God, and carefully safeguard the precious gift of contemplative prayer. The contemplative has succeeded in freeing himself of inordinate self-love, and now reposes in God. His "desire of charity" finds its expression in love "for the sake of loving, as though this were the only good of charity." He cares for naught else but to love God above all, and to love Him for-evermore. God is his all. The life of a contemplative is a steady advance Godward, for, with St. Paul, he can say at every moment of his earthly sojourn: "I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8, 38 sq.).

[37] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. II, 2, qu. 180, a. 7.

The Apostle of the Gentiles here gives us a clear definition of the Christian's path Godward—"the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." The particular path marked out to St. Paul was strewn with all manner of hardships and seeming obstacles. We know this from that ardent lover's Second Letter to the Corinthians. Yet, he never flinched, but followed the path marked out to him with undaunted courage and loyalty. Hence he could likewise speak of victory.

The path Godward is drawing to an end. The description may be disappointing. There is no reason, however, why the reality should be such. If anyone finds the journey through life dull and repellent, it is evident that he is not on the path Godward. He who is travelling along the "path of God's commandments" will experience true joy and delight, especially as he draws near our destined home —Heaven.

We have the testimony of eye-witnesses, and of Sacred Scripture—yea, of God Himself—that there is an abode of perfect bliss, created "before the foundation of the world was laid." It is God's eternal reward to His just and faithful servants. Our desire to at-

tain that blessed good should grow proportionately to our knowledge of it. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived what God has prepared for those that love Him." Compared with heaven's unadulterated joys and delights temporal things are the merest trifles. On the other hand, not even the greatest sufferings of this life "are worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8, 18). Heaven alone can reveal what we are unable to understand. So long as we follow the path Godward, there is no danger of losing that blessed inheritance willed to us by our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

All things temporal are destined to "pass like a shadow," for "the days of man are short." But God and Heaven will remain! So will the human soul remain, ennobled or degraded by one's own deliberate thoughts, words and deeds: "It has been decreed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment." Our one endeavor must then be to remain united to God here, that we may merit perfect bliss in the realm of beatitude. "Even as God rests in Himself alone and is happy in the enjoyment of Himself, so our own soul's happiness lies in the enjoyment of God. He makes

us find rest in Himself both from His works and our own."

No created mind can comprehend the happiness of that eternal rest in the enjoyment of the Supreme Good! "Whatever is desirable in whatsoever beatitude, whether true or false, pre-exists wholly and in a more eminent degree in the divine beatitude. As to contemplative happiness, God possesses a continual and most certain contemplation of Himself and of all things; and as to that which is active, he has the governance of the whole universe. As to earthly happiness, which, according to Boethius, consists in delight, riches, power, dignity and fame, God possesses joy in Himself, and all things else for His delight; instead of riches, He has that complete self-sufficiency which is promised by riches; in place of power, He has omnipotence; for dignities, the government of all things; and in place of fame, He possesses the admiration of all creatures." [38] And in this joy that God possesses in Himself he who perseveres unto the end shall share forever: "I will be thy reward exceeding great."

Every desire of the blessed in Heaven is

[38] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 26, a. 4.

fulfilled: "The desire of the blessed to know all things is fulfilled by the mere fact of their seeing God; just as their desire to possess all good things is fulfilled by their possessing God. For as God suffices the affections in that He has perfect goodness, and by possessing Him we possess all goods as it were, so does the vision of Him suffice the intellect: 'Lord show us the Father, and it is enough for us! (St. John 14, 8.).'"[39] "I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear" (Ps. 16, 15).

The ever present and ever visible God is a source of perennial joy to the blessed: "Since sight and sense will be specifically the same in the glorified body as in a non-glorified body, it will be impossible for it to see the Divine Essence as an object of indirect vision, because on the one hand the bodily sight will see so great a glory of God in bodies, especially in the glorified bodies and most of all in the body of Christ, and, on the other hand, the intellect will see God so clearly, that God will be perceived in things seen with the eye of the body, even as life is perceived in speech. For although our intellect will not then see God from seeing his creatures, yet it will see God

[39] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. III, Supp., qu. 92, a. 3.

in His creatures seen corporeally. This manner of seeing God corporeally is indicated by Augustine, as is clear if we take note of his words, for he says: 'It is very credible that we shall so see the mundane bodies of the new heaven and the new earth, as to see most clearly God everywhere present, governing all corporeal things, not as we now see the invisible things of God as understood by those that are made, but as when we see men . . . we do not believe, but see that they live.' " [40]

It is of this full and perfect joy and bliss that every faithful servant of God is destined to become a partaker forever. "Beatitude is the perfect good of an intellectual nature. And, as everything desires the perfection of its nature, intellectual nature desires naturally to be happy. Now that which is most perfect in any intellectual nature is the intellectual operation by which in some sense it grasps everything. Whence the beatitude of every intellectual nature consists in understanding. In God, to be and to understand are one and the same thing, differing only in the manner of our understanding them. Beatitude must, therefore, be assigned to God in respect of His

[40] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. III, Supp., qu. 92, a. 2.

intellect; as also to the blessed, who are called blessed (*beati*) by reason of the assimilation of His beatitude." [41]

As in this world the just share in the riches of God's bounty according to their capacity, so will they share them, in eternity also, each according to his capacity. Although all of the blessed will be perfectly happy, yet their bliss will differ in degree. Beatitude is a good created for the individual whom God wishes to reward. And since each one will reap according as he has sown, the reward cannot be equal for all. "The beatitude of one is greater than that of another. 'As star differeth from star, so do the saints in heavenly glory.' But nothing is greater than God. Therefore, beatitude is something different from God. The beatitude of an intellectual nature consists in an act of the intellect. In this we may consider two things,—namely, the object of the act, which is the thing understood; and the act itself, which is to understand. If, then, beatitude be considered on the side of the object, God is the only beatitude; for everyone is blessed from this sole fact that he understands God, in accordance with the saying of Augustine,

[41] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. I, qu. 26, a. 2.

'Blessed is he who knoweth Thee, though he know naught else!' But as regards the act of understanding, beatitude is a created thing in beatified creatures." [42] Hence, the reward will be in proportion to the capacity that each one during his probation here on earth shall, with God's grace, have acquired. We ought then, in this as well as in other things, put our whole trust in God. Nothing could be more efficacious in increasing our love of God than a childlike confidence in our Heavenly Father's goodness, and an earnest effort to know Him better and love Him more ardently.

Make then, O God, Thyself, the one object of my love, desire, and affection. For "Thou art, in truth, the centre of the universe, to which all things tend by their innate weight, in which they all rest, and by which they are all sustained. In Thee are found the attraction of every love, the consummation of every desire, the term of every movement, and the satisfaction of every appetite. For what can I seek or desire outside of Thee, who art the plenitude of all good, the source, the end, the sweetness of every good, who art infinitely better and

[42] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica,* P. I, qu. 26, a. 3.

more excellent than all good? Let me, therefore, despise everything else, and let me ever think of Thee. Let me love Thee always; let me live intimately attached to Thee, and let me make of Thee my abiding place. Let me love Thee and bless Thee; let all the powers of my soul, and my whole life, be consumed in Thy service. Let all passing things be considered vile in comparison with Thee, and let me despise them for love of Thee. Let all that is Thine be dear to me, and be Thou, O my God, dearer than all. According to Thy most exalted pleasure, perfect me in Thy knowledge and Thy love and translate me entirely into Thee so that I may be of one spirit with Thee." [43]

Such must be our unceasing prayer and effort. Each and every individual Christian is to reach his eternal destiny by following the path of supernatural love or charity. The rugged path of "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord," is the only one that can conduct us from earth to Heaven. This blessed goal may be reached by the one in a shorter period of time than it is attained by

[43] Lessius, S.J., *The Names of God*, tr. by Campbell, p. 171, sqq.

another. Then, too, it is not equally rough and thorny; but these are non-essentials. The "one thing needful" is that we pursue the path Godward unto the end, and thus establish a claim to the "reward exceeding great," according to the measure and degree of God's grace vouchsafed through Christ Jesus, our Lord. "The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day" (Prov. 4, 18)," which is the day of glory.

O.A.M.D.G.

THE END

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